



PHD

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Role Institutionalisation of the Post-Lisbon EU Council Rotating Presidency**

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**Between Institutional Feedback and Role Making: Role Institutionalisation of the
Post-Lisbon EU Council Rotating Presidency**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies

04 May 2017

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Abstract

The Lisbon Treaty introduced one of the most far reaching reforms of the EU foreign policy system. This has been particularly noticeable in the example of the rotating Presidency of the EU Council. By transferring the functions formerly associated with the Presidency to the newly established actors, the President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Presidency's role has been severely limited. Yet with only limited formal provisions, the practical arrangements were to be clarified in due course of the implementation phase. This thesis explores this phase by tracing the processes of the implementation and informal adaptation of the Treaty's provisions in the post-Lisbon context of EU foreign policy making. The analytical framework incorporating new institutionalist and role-based insights aims to capture the institutional development of the Presidency's role as an outcome of the institutional feedback and particular role making of the first Member States in the chair. The proposed model of role institutionalisation is argued to explore mechanisms of institutional change in a more in-depth manner as a constitutive process at the structural and agential levels. The concept of role making is used to capture and explore the influence of Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland on the inter-institutional positioning and functional scope of the post-Lisbon Presidency. At the national level of analysis, the individual role enactment of these countries reflects their national preferences towards both the system of European foreign policy and national role conceptions. At the same time, however, their individual role making is both enabled and/or constrained by the emerging system of the post-Lisbon foreign policy making (institutional feedback), and by a set of factors at the national, European and international levels. Consequently, the analysis confirms the added value of applying role theory while studying the Presidency, as well as highlights its analytical usefulness in exploring the process of institutional change.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFET European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs

ASEAN Association of South-East Asian Nations

BE Belgium

CEU Council of the European Union

CFSP Common Foreign and Security Policy

COM European Commission / Commission of the European Communities

COREPER Committee of Permanent Representatives (French : *Comité des Représentants Permanents*)

COREU EU Communication Network (French: *Correspondance Européenne*)

CSDP Common Security and Defence Policy

DG Directorate-General

EaP Eastern Partnership

EC European Council

ECOFIN Economic and Financial Affairs Council

ECSC European Coal and Steel Community

EED European Endowment for Democracy

EDA European Defence Agency

EDC European Defence Community

EEAS European External Action Service

EEC European Economic Community

EFTA European Free Trade Association

ENP European Neighbourhood Policy

EP European Parliament

EPC European Political Cooperation

ES Spain

ESDP European Security and Defence Policy

EU European Union

EURATOM European Atomic Energy Community

FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
FM	Foreign Minister
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
GAC	General Affairs Council
GAERC	General Affairs and External Relations Council
HI	Historical Institutionalism
HR	High Representative
HRVP	High Representative and Vice-President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
HU	Hungary
IR	International Relations
LT	Lisbon Treaty
MEP	Member of the EP
MFA	Minister of Foreign Affairs
NI	New Institutionalism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PL	Poland
PM	Prime Minister
POTEC	President of the European Council
PSC	Political and Security Committee
QMV	Qualified majority voting
REPER	Permanent Representation to the EU (in Brussels)
SEA	Single European Act
SI	Sociological Institutionalism
SG	Secretariat General
SGC	Secretariat General of the Council of the European Union
RCI	Rational Choice Institutionalism
TEC	Treaty establishing the European Community
TEU	Treaty on European Union, also known as the Maastricht Treaty, as revised by the Treaty of Lisbon)
WG	Working Group

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CHAPTER I Introduction

The lack of satisfactory progress in developing a common EU foreign policy has often been attributed to inadequate structure and insufficient institutional framework (for example, Pol 2011, Regelsberger 2011, Meunier and Nicolaïdis 2011, Barber 2010, Portella and Raube 2009, Pinelli 2007, Hadfield 2006, Smith 2004, Barbé, 2004, Wagner 2003, Diedrichs and Jopp 2003). The rotating Presidency of the EU Council (the Presidency) for decades maintained its central position within EU policy making. The six-month chairmanship held in turn by each of the Member States over the various configurations of the EU Council (CEU) and its working groups (WGs) has ensured national representation and rotating leadership over EU affairs. With the successive expansion of policy areas, and the increasing complexity of EU policy making and subsequent enlargements, the Presidency started increasingly to be perceived as the main reason for the EU's ineffective performance on the international stage (Delreux 2012, Cameron 2007). The lack of effective foreign policy strategy was often attributed to the Presidency's powers to set the EU agenda which tended to shift every six months to reflect particular national interests of the Member State in the chair of the Presidency. In addition, with the small Member States being overwhelmed by an increasing workload and suffering from the decreased credibility on the international stage, a change in the rotating system became one of the main issues on the EU institutional reform agenda. Consequently, with the Lisbon Treaty (LT) being one of the most recent attempts to upgrade the EU institutional structure, this has been the most visible with reference to the functions and inter-institutional position of the institution of the Presidency in EU external relations (Bunse and Klein 2014). The aim of this thesis is to examine the post-Lisbon role of the Presidency in this particular policy area. I adopt a role theory-based understanding of the role as a pattern of behaviour resulting from the interaction of expectations and purposive decision of the actor in charge of this role (this will be further explained in chapter 2).

The LT did not provide a clear prescription of roles and the adoption of the new Treaty was followed by the period of informal adaptation during which the new division of labour among new and old actors emerged in the making. The imprecise provisions created an opportunity for the actors involved in their application to take active part in shaping of the post-Lisbon regime. As noted by Van Hecke and Bursens'... the treaty re-

mains rather vague, if not silent, about the way in which the relationship between the Council presidency and the [POTEC] presidency should work. Of course, this leaves room for manoeuvre to the players who need to implement the provisions of the LT on a daily basis' (2014: 111). The question of this ability to influence the post-Lisbon structure of EU external affairs emerges as the central puzzle of this research. I argue that the first Member States used their time in the office to clarify the post-Lisbon provisions and to work out in the practice the functional roles of the Presidency. Yet, each of the four first Member States behaved differently while in the chair of the Presidency. Essentially, this thesis aims to explain behaviour of the first Member States in the chair of the post-Lisbon Presidency. The case studies of the Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies are used to analyse the process of institutional change and decision making in EU foreign policy post-Lisbon.¹

The 2009 institutional reform introduced by the LT restructured the institutional architecture of European foreign policy making by introducing a permanent Presidency over foreign affairs and the institutionalisation of the European Council (EC). The two new actors, the High Representative and Vice President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP) and the President of the EC (POTEC) took over the role of the pre-Lisbon rotating Presidency by ensuring organisational administration, representation and political leadership over EU foreign affairs. With the introduction of new supranational actors and the decoupling of the existing role of the Presidency, this has represented the most far reaching reform of European foreign policy making so far. Following the immediate changes, scholars and practitioners quickly concluded that post-Lisbon, the Presidency has become 'politically irrelevant' (Kaczyński 2012) and the LT assigned the Member State in the chair 'virtually no role in the domain of external action' (Missiroli 2010: 430). Further research challenged this by demonstrating that the role has been

¹ The case studies of the Presidencies are analysed by the combination of primary and secondary sources and data collected during elite and expert interviewing. The primary data on the first two case studies, the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies, was collected on the basis of primary and secondary literature. By the time this research project started both Presidencies, their involvement in the EU foreign policy making and potential impact on the emerging post-Lisbon system had been extensively analysed by academic and policy-oriented researchers. Due to the fact that the project was still at the preliminary stage only a limited number of interviews was conducted with the officials involved in the management of these two Presidencies. The data obtained from these interviews enabled a more in-depth understanding of the case studies and a possible comparison with the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies. In the case of the two latter Presidencies, the primary data was collected through interviewing of the national, European and international officials involved in the Presidency's management and the EU policy making system. The available primary and secondary sources served as a cross-checking material to provide a greater validity of the findings. This will be further elaborated in chapter 3 while discussing the research methodology.

severely limited, yet it has not been abolished altogether (Bunse and Klein 2014, Puetter 2014, Van Hecke and Bursens 2014, Gostyńska 2011, Vanhoonacker et al. 2011, and Whitman 2008). As noted above, most of the previous functions associated with the Presidency in EU foreign affairs have been moved to the portfolios of the new actors – the HRVP and the POTEK. However, the LT did not prescribe the final functional organisation of the new system and thus it resulted in rather ambiguous provisions with reference to the functions and inter-institutional positions of the new actors and in particular of the Presidency (Bunse and Klein 2014, Puetter 2014, Van Hecke and Bursens 2014). As noted by Avery (2007), this was a deliberate move. The imprecise institutional provisions were to enable a more flexible implementation and thus provide a greater functionality of the emerging system. This would enable both the old and new actors to work out and adjust their functions and inter-institutional positions in the subsequent process of informal institutional adaptation.

This argument fits into the recent institutionalist strand on gradual and endogenous institutional change which focuses on periods of implementation of the new provisions by emphasising how inconclusive formal rules create institutional ambiguities (e.g. Mahoney and Thelen 2010, Farrell and Héritier 2007, Héritier 2007). Sheingate argues that these ‘ambiguities (...) provide critical openings for creativity and agency’, and this allows for focusing the analysis on the influence of agents tasked with implementing new rules in practice (cited in Mahoney and Thelen 2012: 12). As noted by Bunse and Klein ‘the precise roles of the newly created institutions (...) were only vaguely defined in the Lisbon Treaty, thus leaving scope for informal institutionalisation of new norms and behaviours’ (2014: 82). In the case of the LT, the vagueness of the new formal provisions with reference to the post-Lisbon divisions of labour among new and old actors ‘leaves room for manoeuvre to the players who need to implement the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty on a daily basis’ (Van Hecke and Bursens 2014: 111). This prompts two main research questions:

1. How did the first Member States interpret their role and behaviour while in the chair of the post-Lisbon rotating Presidencies in the area of EU external relations?

To what extent is the process of role institutionalisation based on the previous role of the pre-Lisbon Presidency (previous functions as well as the existence of pre-Lisbon intra role conflicts between agenda shaping and neutral brokering), on the institutional

feedback emerging from the fledgling system, and on the particular role making of the Member State in the chair (role preference and role enactment)?

2. How did their individual performance affect the evolution of the inter-institutional position and functions of the post-Lisbon Presidency?

To what extent is the preference held by the Member States towards its time in the office (role preference) guided by informal expectations held by other involved actors, the national role conceptions of the countries with reference to its foreign and European policies, and the role assessment of the previous Presidencies' performance (role assessment)?

What is the capacity of the country in the chair to project its individual role preference to the structural level and to shape the role prescription of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy (role making)? What are the key factors affecting this capacity for role making?

Subsequently, I aim to tackle the broader question of the process of institutional change in European foreign policy following the implementation of the LT. This is achieved through the example of the institutional adaptation of the Presidency's functions and its inter-institutional position post-Lisbon by focusing on the policy area which has been affected by these changes to the largest extent – European foreign policy making.

In order to address these questions, this thesis employs a role-based theory of institutional change introducing a model of role institutionalisation. I argue that conceptualising institutional change as a two-stage model of role institutionalisation allows for a more comprehensive explanation of how actors interpret and implement ambiguous institutional provisions. This approach offers a more in-depth understanding of institutional change by focusing on the process of institutional adaptation as the result of interactions between actors tasked with implementation and interpretation of the new rules (role making), and the functional requirements emerging from the post-Lisbon system of European foreign policy making (the institutional feedback). While role making makes it possible to capture the strategic action of individual Member States, the concept of role institutionalisation helps to assess the structural evolution of the post-Lisbon Presidency's role in the long term perspective, and to assess the level of individual Member States' influence on the shaping of the new system. The concept of institutional feedback aims to capture the structural factors within the process of the Presiden-

cy's institutional change by focusing on the emerging system, its new actors and their functional impact affecting the inter-institutional position and functional scope of the post-Lisbon Presidency.²

Role theory enables to bring additional focus to the micro-level of analysis by examining how these new functions are developed and articulated by the main actors involved in the shaping of the new policy making system. With no clear functions prescribed in the LT, the role the Presidency depends on the individual behaviour of the Member State in charge of this office. I argue that role theory can explain not only this behaviour, but also the variations among Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland. The role-based concept of a national role conception enables to understand each of these countries' strategy for the EU membership and subsequently for their approach towards the Presidency. By distinguishing between role preference and role prescription it is possible to examine the capacity of the Member State to pursue their chosen Presidency's strategy and the impact on the overall position and role of the post-Lisbon Presidency.

Following the successful application of role theory to explaining foreign policy behaviour I attempt to test its ability to study institutional change. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, role theory has already proved particularly useful in studying both the EU foreign policy and the institution of the Presidency, it is thus possible that it might provide additional conceptual and analytical focus to study institutional change by focusing on the purposive behaviour of agents, Member States, within the emerging structure of the post-Lisbon regime. The application of role theory has been argued to better capture interplay between agential and structural levels of analysis (for example Wehner and Thies 2014, Harnisch et al. 2011, 2010, Thies and Breuning 2012, Breuning 2011, Aggestam 2004, 2006). In the case of this research it will enable to capture the interplay between agents' behaviour and the impact of the emerging system which shapes the institutionalisation of the new role.

The process of role institutionalisation is explored through the examples of the first four rotating Presidencies, held by Spain (January-June 2010), Belgium (July-December 2010), Hungary (January-June 2011) and Poland (July-December 2011). These four Presidencies should enable the investigation of the immediate implementation of the formal provisions of the LT during the two-year period of institutional adaptation. I will

² The concept of institutional feedback, along with other relevant concepts, will be further discussed in chapter 3.

examine how these four first Member States, with no clear formal role prescriptions, interpreted their role while in the chair of the Presidency and if their performance influenced the shaping of the post-Lisbon system. This will make it possible for me to assess to what extent each of these Member States were involved in role making of the post-Lisbon Presidency and to what extent this role was shaped by the other actors within the emerging system conceptualised here as the institutional feedback. Drawing on the empirical findings, this thesis will demonstrate the usefulness of applying a role-based approach towards studying institutional change by demonstrating how concepts of role making and institutional feedback capture the constitutive mechanism of institutional change as a result of the interaction between the agential and structural levels. The next two sections will explore these two levels by analysing the institution of the Presidency and the system of European foreign policy making. The final two sections will provide a brief overview of the analytical approach and the research method applied, and will be followed by the outline of the thesis.

1.1 The Institution of the EU Council Rotating Presidency

The Presidency has been traditionally associated with four main functions – administrative management, honest brokering, political leadership/policy entrepreneurship, and finally internal representation of the CEU and external representation of the EU. Some of these functions have been informally associated with an opportunity to influence the European agenda by projecting national preferences (for example Bunse 2009, Thomson 2008, Warntjen 2007, Tallberg 2006, 2004, 2003, Elgström 2003). However, the question of whether the CEU chairmanship actually empowers or rather constrains the Member State in the chair with reference to projection of national priorities has been one of the most contentious issues in the academic research. Some authors have argued that due to the expectation that the country in the chair should be neutral and act as an honest broker, its pursuit of national preferences has been heavily restricted (Whitman 1998, Schout 1998, Kirchner and Tsagkari 1993, Ludlow 1993, Dewost 1984). Thus, the Presidency has been perceived as a supranational – Community function and often branded as ‘responsibility without power’ (Dewost 1984: 31). On the other hand, by employing theories of intergovernmental bargaining and agenda shaping processes, some researchers demonstrated the privileged position of the Presidency in its access to the European agenda and policy making process (Bunse 2009, Thomson 2008, Tallberg 2006, 2004,

2003, Elgström 2003, 2006). This second strand of the literature, mostly dominated by the rational choice institutionalism and negotiation theories, conceptualises the Presidency as an intergovernmental function and deemphasises the rule of neutrality (Warntjen 2007, Tallberg 2006, 2004, 2003). The latter issue becomes even more interesting in the context of this research with reference to the influence and leadership capacity of the Presidency and the Member State in its chair on the position of this institution within the European policy making system. Consequently, by exploring the first post-Lisbon Presidencies held by Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland, this thesis seeks to analyse their influence, or lack of it, on the emerging post-Lisbon role of the Presidency in European foreign policy.

The research on the Presidency has been further complicated by the fact that there have been few formal rules regulating the rotating CEU chairmanship (Leal 2010, Bunse 2009). In its original design the Presidency was established as an institutional mechanism ensuring administrative organisation and coordination over European affairs (Fernández Pasarín 2008a). Over the decades its role and the overall pattern of behaviour expanded from mere administration to driving European legislation by seeking compromise between EU Member States and other institutions, and introducing new policy initiatives (Ibid.). Pre-Lisbon, this complex role set was particularly visible in the area of European foreign affairs where the intergovernmental method continued as the main mode of policy making, and thus influence of other European institutions was severely limited. A Member State in the chair of the Presidency enjoyed a six-month period of spotlight by representing the EU externally and managing the EU official agenda.

As this thesis will demonstrate, the Presidency's functions grew over the years as an answer to institutional feedback, rather than by conscious design of the original actors. Its increasingly important position evolved as a reaction to the institutional deficiencies in administrative and leadership capacity in the process of advancing European integration and expansion into new policy areas (Fernández Pasarín 2008a, 2008b). This institutional adaptation resulted in the emergence of mutually exclusive rules of conduct and functions which can be perceived as in conflict with each other. As stated by Schout, 'the Presidency has to be capable to combine sector-specific concerns with neutrality and with the need to provide leadership without one or the other being subordinate a priori' (1998: 2). Therefore, the Presidency can be perceived as an

institution managing conflicting expectations, ‘juggling three balls at the same time, leadership, neutrality and national interests’ (Schout 1998: 2). It has consequently emerged as one of the most adaptable institutions within the European policy making system, with a portfolio of functions enabling the Member State in its chair to perform a rather flexible enactment of the CEU chairman’s role. It is yet to be seen if the post-Lisbon Presidency would continue with this trend.

The Presidency has not only been associated with the functions, provided by its institutional expectations, that the Member State in chair of the Presidency was expected to perform, but increasingly with more informal expectations directed towards individual Member States. Variations between individual Member States as well as variations with reference to various policy areas have emerged as the most recent research puzzle associated with the Presidency (e.g. Leal 2010, Schout and Vanhoonacker 2006, Elgström 2003). Such an approach allows for a more comprehensive picture of the Presidency as a constitutive interplay of structurally based expectations towards the role of the Presidency itself as well as towards individual Member States in the chair. It also enables individual interpretations by the Member States of their role while in the chair.

Consequently, the institution of the Presidency, with its complex nature and its both formally and informally developed, and to some extent mutually incompatible, rules and functions, constituted an important, yet largely under-researched, academic puzzle already in the pre-Lisbon context. With the LT radically changing the context of the rotating CEU chairmanship in the area of European foreign policy this puzzle has become even more interesting as the formal functions of the Presidency became severely limited when the new actors formally took over management of EU foreign affairs. In the past, the Presidency managed to expand its functional role and inter-institutional position by adapting it to the changing EU system and taking on new functions and expanding its functioning to new policy areas without formal institutionalisation of its role. With its growing functional role, the Presidency has evolved from a purely intergovernmental function towards a complex combination of national and European functions. As noted by Bunse, the Presidency’s hybrid nature refers to ‘an intergovernmental policy actor (with its own preferences, areas of expertise, and political and administrative culture) in charge of a supranational institution’ (2009: 2). This has particular relevance to the evolution of the Presidency’s

functions and inter-institutional position. In the context of European foreign policy, the pre-Lisbon Presidency's role institutionalisation had been influenced by both common European expectations and the particular expectations expressed towards particular Member States. This was further influenced by the intergovernmental character of European foreign policy. Even though the LT upgraded the management of EU foreign affairs to the supranational level via newly created European institutions, it is yet to be seen how this will impact on policy making. As I will argue in the following section, this ambiguous character of European foreign policy, developed somewhere between a collective action and more or less common values and interests, might further affect the implementation of institutional change.

1.2 European Foreign Policy

The problem with explaining European foreign policy starts with the complex nature of the EU itself, with some definitions characterising it as a 'quasi-state', some treating it as another international organisation, and some arguing that the EU is *sui generis* (Böröcz and Sarkar 2005, Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003). This makes defining European foreign policy also a challenging task. The making of EU foreign policy comprises a mixture of various policy areas, such as foreign affairs, trade and development policies, economic relations, regional cooperation, and a mixture of intergovernmental and to some extent Community methods. This particular complex nature of EU foreign affairs seems to be one of the key factors influencing the role institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency, as the institution has retained some of the previous functions in the policy areas, for example of development and trade. Thus, post-Lisbon foreign policy making requires the coordination and cooperation of the various actors involved in the process at different levels (e.g. the European Council, the Foreign Affairs Council, sectoral working groups) and in different policy areas (e.g. CFSP, CSDP, enlargement, trade, development).

Some researchers have argued that European foreign policy making has failed to be explained by International Relations (IR) theories which focus on relations between states, or traditional Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), due to its predominantly state-centric approach. As noted by Smith '(...) the study of [European] policy lies somewhat uneasily between European integration and international relations' (2006: 322). Authors working on the subject of EU foreign policy have long advanced the idea that the analysis of EU foreign policy and the foreign policies of its Member States

needs a distinct approach (e.g. Manners and Whitman 2000, Hill and Wallace 1996, Carlsnaes and Smith 1994, Hill 1993, Clarke and White 1989). The field of European FPA has expanded quickly with studies on the external role of the EU (Orbie 2008, Hill and Smith 2005, Lavenex 2001, Ginsberg 1999) and the individual Member States' foreign policies (Keukeleire and MacNaughton 2008, Bulmer and Lequesne 2005, Manners and Whitman 2000). The third group of analyses investigates the interaction of European foreign policy with foreign policies of particular Member States (e.g. Torreblanca 2001, Strang 2007, Tonra 1999, 2001,). The latter approach has used concepts specifically designed for European studies, such as Europeanisation (e.g. Wong and Hill 2012, Alecu De Flers 2012, Alecu de Flers and Müller 2010, Torreblanca 2001, Tonra 1999). This approach implies that there is a mutual impact, both from the EU, on both the content of the foreign policy agenda and the structure of foreign policy making of its Member States and also from the Member States on both the institutional settings and the substance of European foreign policy making. This study draws on this reasoning by arguing that there is a bi-directional influence of the EU and the Member States on each other which can be captured in the process of role institutionalisation and application of role analysis.

From the beginning, the functioning of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) was 'less than supranational but more than intergovernmental' (Wessels 1982). Additionally, as noted by Tonra, even though 'there is (...) no 'communitarization' of CFSP decision-making, a system is under construction that has certainly moved away from formal intergovernmentalism' (2003: 733). The nature of cooperation in European foreign policy making has remained one of the key issues in academic research. Some researchers focus on capturing the gradual shift of the foreign policy making process from national capitals to Brussels by conceptualising it as the process of Brusselisation (Allen 1998). This 'physical move of the CFSP governance system (and those officials involved) to Brussels' (Juncos and Pomorska 2011: 4) results in a weakening of 'the control exercised by the Member States on the decision-making processes' (2011: 3). The concept of Europeanisation goes beyond Brusselisation, incorporating in the process mechanisms of social learning and socialisation and arguing changes at the level of construction of national interests and national identities (Wong 2006, Bulmer and Radaelli 2004, Tonra 2001). Consequently, over the years, European foreign policy has developed from a mere collection of mutual interests of the EU Member States to an

increasingly coordinated cooperation at both national and European levels, to some extent a common understanding of European interests and, finally, the collective formation of identity at the European level. As a result of intensive socialisation and learning in the EU system of foreign policy making, Member States and their civil servants are subject to informally developed rules regulating common behaviour, for example the consensus-seeking norm and ‘reflex of coordination’ (Tonra 2001, Smith 2001, 2004, Glarbo 1999, Smith 1998, Wessels and Weiler 1988). Therefore, the EU framework for foreign policy comprises a policy making environment with no formal mechanisms of rule enforcement or conditionality; rather being regulated by a culture of cooperation and persuasion through communicative action and peer pressure exercised to ensure appropriate behaviour. With the key features being consensus and problem-solving, the policy problems are addressed by collective formulation of their definitions and solutions that are advocated by reference to European identity and interests (Smith 2004). The common understanding results in European foreign policy making being regulated by willing compliance rather than strictly regulated conditionality.

The particular framework of EU foreign policy making creates a distinctive informal normative context which creates expectations towards the behaviour of Member States and thus might influence the implementation of the LT’s provisions and how the emerging institutional ambiguities are interpreted. The LT has ensured the intergovernmental method of working for CFSP, and thus the particular role of the Member States, while at the same time strengthening the institutional framework at the supranational level. This has resulted in maintaining the complex nature of the interactions trapped between supranational institutions and intergovernmental reflexes. This recent shift triggers a question as to what extent this can alter the level of influence of Member States on EU foreign policy. Therefore, in the context of the Presidency, its intergovernmental character might create a window of opportunity for the first Member States in the chair to imprint their individual interpretation on the new role, reflecting their national stances towards foreign policy at the national and European levels. As this analysis reveals, this institutional creativity has been both empowered and constrained by the fledgling post-Lisbon system. Consequently, as argued before, the new role of the Presidency will develop as a result of institutional feedback as well as of the deliberate role making of the Member States in the chair of the first post-Lisbon Presidencies.

1.3 Analytical Framework, Methodology and Sources

The recent strand of study of institutional change has shifted the focus from large, external event-based changes into examining the more gradual and endogenous transformation of institutions. One of the most relevant examples of this approach is the study by Farrell and Héritier (2007, 2005) introducing the concept of ‘incomplete contracting’ as a manner of operationalizing subsequent institutional ambiguities emerging as a result of formal institutional change. These ambiguities create the need to ensure the further institutional adaptation of working arrangements that are often informal in their nature. As argued by Mahoney and Thelen, the window of opportunity created by the need to ensure interpretation of the formal rules might turn into a conflict ‘with different groups which deliberately exploit ambiguities and press interpretations that favour their interests’ (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 11). This is further highlighted by Héritier’s research into the EU comitology and codecision rules; based on the theory of power-based distributive bargaining it is assumed ‘that actors are competence maximizers that whilst seeking to increase the efficiency of an institutional rule also try to ensure that a policy will be enacted through procedures which maximize their own degree of control over the process of policy-making’ (2012: 40). This recent strand looking into the incremental and gradual transformation of institutions seems to provide useful insights for studying the informal adaptation of the Presidency’s role in the aftermath of what I argue was an incomplete formal change.

This research, grounded in new institutionalism, applies role theory at the operational level of analysis. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, new institutionalism offers a bridging framework between institutional stability and institutional change through processes of gradual transformation and endogenous adjustments. It also acknowledges a constitutive relationship between agential and structural elements involved in institutional change. However, it does not provide enough theoretical underpinnings to understand actors’ behaviour on the international stage and thus trace how the institutional change happens. This is where role theory can provide a clear explanation through application of role-based concepts, such as ‘role conceptions (the role(s) a foreign policy actor believes it should play), role expectations (the role(s) that an external actor believe another actor should play) and role behaviour (the role(s) which are played)’ (Chappell 2012: 27). Chappell points to strategic culture as the main factor shaping the policy-makers’ actions and argues that the application of role theory proves

particularly useful in understanding how ‘this moves from the national to the EU level’ (2012: 23). The ability of a role-based analysis to integrate various factors at the national, European and international levels demonstrates its organizational value (Chappell 2012, Rosenau 1987, Walker 1987).

As further explained in Chapter 3, a role-based model of role institutionalisation is based on interaction between the Member States in the chair of the Presidency and the fledgling post-Lisbon system of European foreign policy. I argue that the informal institutional adaptation of the LT’s formal provisions can serve as a vital intermediate variable in explaining the process of institutional change of the Presidency. This analysis adopts the concept of role making, originally developed by Herbert Mead (Harnisch 2012, 2011), which is further expanded by incorporating insights stemming from research on institutional entrepreneurship. The aim is to reintroduce the influence of agency and its preferences into studying institutional change. I argue that incorporating a role-based approach to new institutionalist framework might offer an analytical framework better equipped to capture the process of institutional change as an interactive and constitutive process of role institutionalisation at the structural and agential levels. Role theory seems to complement the new institutionalist accounts by zooming in on the micro-level of the analysis and on the processes of institutional change. Operating within concepts such as role preferences, role expectations, role enactment, role assessments, and role making will allow for exploration of an additional perspective, in particular for studying the agency - structure mutual interactions. Such an analytical framework allows us to take into account institutions as intermediate-level variables affecting the relative bargaining power of the actors over time. This is done through the establishment of rules of conduct which foster coalition while at the same time affect both national preferences and identities. It also emphasises Member States as institutionally-embedded agents who are thus being both constrained and enabled by the institution’s environment in their behaviour. This implies therefore them being at least theoretically capable of shaping this environment and thus pursuing institutional change.

This research favours the interpretive qualitative approach which seems to be better suited to address an exploratory nature of this research. The rationale behind this choice is that the qualitative approach ‘is capable of saying a good deal more about the institution and countries chosen and shows a greater contextual detail than quantitative

methods can exhibit' (Bunse 2009: 10). Furthermore, following the interpretative approach, the project seeks to 'understand phenomenon through accessing the meaning participants assign to them' (Orlikowski and Baroud 1991: 5) and at the same time 'emphasising not only the importance of subjective meanings for the individual actor, but also the social structures which condition and enable such meaning and are constituted by them' (Walsham 1993: 246). Thus this research aims to explain the phenomenon of institutionalisation in the context of the LT implementation. This study seeks to explore the behaviour of the Member States in the chair of the Presidency in order to identify emerging patterns of behaviour, such as new role conceptions, expectations, informal practices and norms, and other factors which shape the subsequent stage of role institutionalisation of the Presidency. As argued by Aggestam, 'a vital insight into the way structural changes impact on foreign policy can be obtained from understanding how political agents perceive these conditions, rather than assuming deterministic adaptation' (2004: 3). The interpretative approach is particularly significant as in order to answer the question of how the new role is being formed, it is necessary to look at the meaning that all of the actors involved in the process held towards the role of the Presidency, namely their expectations. The approach thus completes role theory in an attempt to look at the relationship between the agency and structure and more specifically their mutual interaction. Because this project's main focus is to examine the quality of the correlation between agential and structural levels within the process of institutional change, it adopts a qualitative methodology in order to establish 'explanation or understanding of the social phenomena and their context' (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 5).

The methodology combines the use of interpretative process-tracing and comparative case-study method. The preference for a small number of case studies enables to prioritise an in-depth understanding of each individual case in all its complexity. As noted by Yin 'case studies are preferred strategy when *how* or *why* questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (1994: 1). Since this research project aims to capture the changing role of the Presidency, the first four Presidencies are analysed and compared in order to identify any emerging patterns of behaviour and functions which are shared among the subsequent Member States in the chair. The choice of the subsequently held Presidencies was also aimed to address the potential

problem of biased selection. Following the EU adopted pattern for the Presidency rotation, this selection covers big and small, old and new, and in geographical terms diversely located Member States. Such an approach potentially enables to account for various intervening variables such as size of the country, its traditional interests and previous experience of Presidency. As argued above, since the LT is a recent phenomenon the case studies available for research are limited. By focusing on the period of the aftermath of the institutional change I aim to undertake an in-depth analysis of behaviour of individual Member States, yet still remain capable of identifying evolving general patterns of the Presidency's role in European foreign policy making.

The study thus focuses on the first four Presidencies held post-Lisbon and in particular on the examples of the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies. These were the first two Presidencies to operate within the fully operational post-Lisbon structure. Following the appointment of the HRVP and POTEK in December 2009 the EEAS was put in place, and started to operate in January 2011 thus creating a new institutional context of European foreign policy making. The examples of the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies are examined in a comparative perspective against the first two Presidencies, the Spanish and the Belgian Presidencies in order to provide an overview of the two-year process of institutional adaptation. As earlier highlighted, the main research interviews were conducted in the period of 2011-2012. Thus, only limited number of the Spanish and Belgian officials was interviewed upon the completion of the Presidency. The primary data collection in the case of the first two Presidencies was based on relevant documents and secondary sources. In a case of the subsequent two Presidencies, the primary method of data collection was interviewing which was divided into three stages: a pre-stage before the Presidency commenced, during the six month months while in the chair finally after the Presidency was concluded. The aim was to capture any changes in the interpretations of the Presidency's role and its performance. Thus, the triangulation of data collection and data sources was to not only provide a greater reliability and validity of the findings but also to ensure a greater level of compatibility between all four Presidencies.

By mapping functions developed by each of the Member State, Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland, it is possible to identify which of the functions were identified across all of these Member States and if and which functions were introduced by

individual Presidencies. Analysing the period of the chairmanship for individual Member States allows identifying the institutional capacity and the position of the Presidency at a given time. The subsequent comparison across four Presidencies will result in assessing what was the influence of individual Member States, namely Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland on the emerging role of the Presidency in the area of European foreign policy making. In order for the comparison to take place, a structured research design is set up and followed throughout the individual case studies. This will be further discussed in Chapter 3. Such a comparative approach, as argued by Della Porta, allows us to understand elements such as preferences, motivations and contexts and how they explain the phenomenon investigated (2008: 201-202). As explained by Collier, process-tracing refers to ‘the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator. Process-tracing can contribute decisively both to describing political and social phenomena and to evaluating causal claims’ (Collier 2011: 823). The case-study approach employs a process-tracing method in order to identify the patterns of behaviour of Member States in the chair of the Presidency. This is done in the form of the model of role institutionalisation. Employed in this thesis is the interpretative variant of process-tracing, understood as narration in search for patterns (Gysen et al. 2006). This approach will enable me to give an account of the events as they unfolded and identify emerging patterns of behaviour. Chapter 3 elaborates further on how the role-based model of role institutionalisation has been used in the structuring of the process-tracing analysis.

The analysis is based on the analysis of crucial policy documents and public statements of the actors involved, as well as semi-structured interviews with national, European and international officials involved in the process of European policy making. Such a combination of research methods, document reviewing and elite interviewing, follows the logic of triangulation. This is understood as ‘the observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points’ (Flick 2006) in order to provide for greater reliability, verification and validity of the collected evidence, and subsequently the overall conclusions by cross checking and verifying collected data. As further pointed by Lewis and Ritchie ‘triangulation assumes that the use of different sources of information will help both to confirm and improve the clarity of precision, of a research finding’ (2009: 239). Moreover, for Decrop (1999) triangulation can reduce or even

eliminate personal and methodological biases and increase the probability of generalising the findings of a study as the gathered data reflects various research methods and data sources.³ Therefore, by employing the triangulation of methods of data collection the problems of validity and credibility of the findings and possible bias that comes from using a single method will be addressed.

1.4 Contributions and Limitations of the Study

The study will first of all contribute to the understanding of the nature and context of exercising the Presidency chairmanship in the post-Lisbon system. It will further contribute to comparative research on the CEU Presidency by providing empirical data on the Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies. In theoretical terms, it will contribute to the development of approaches capable of exploring the subject of the hybrid nature of the Presidency and the usefulness of role theory in studying foreign policy making within the European context. In the context of the latter, the project will test the usefulness and applicability of a role-based framework in studying institutional change and interactions between the formal and informal dimensions of EU policy making. Consequently, the applicability of role theory into the study of institutional change will be further confirmed. The final result, the analytical model of institutional adaptation, can be applied to study other instances institutional change – focusing on both macro and micro-levels of analysis. Finally, by analysing the emerging architecture of the EU the study will contribute to the understanding of the impact that the LT has on the foreign policy making of the EU and its Member States. In general, the aim is to provide further understanding of the issue of collective action by states in matters of ‘high politics’.

One of the limitations of this research is that the main comparative analysis is based on the example of the first four Member States in the chair of the Presidency after the provisions of the LT began to be implemented in 2010. This created a unique transitional period, thus the context of exercising the Presidency may change over time and the identified role conceptions, role expectations and factors shaping the context of the role institutionalisation process may be only applicable to this particular context.

³ One of the most comprehensive definitions is the one proposed by Thomas Schwandt: ‘Triangulation is a means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws. It can involve the use of multiple data sources, multiple investigators, multiple theoretical perspectives, and/or multiple methods.’ (p. 298) He continues: ‘The strategy of triangulation is often wedded to the assumption that data from different sources or methods must necessarily converge or be aggregated to reveal the truth’ (2007: 298).

Nevertheless, as argued before, the main purpose of this study is to develop a model enabling for examining the mechanism of incremental and endogenous institutional change. Moreover, the difference between the primary collection method between the first two and the two subsequent Presidencies might limit the comparability of the case studies. As explained earlier, in order to address this issue I include a combination of both research methods, namely the analysis of primary and secondary sources and interviewing as well as putting a place a structured research design based on the proposed model of role institutionalisation. Finally, by providing better understanding of the position and institutional capacity of the Presidency in the new hybrid system of European foreign policy making, this thesis aims to provide a better informed environment for the Member States in their preparations for the CEU chairmanship, consequently bridging the divide between the academic and policy making world.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 presents the overview of the literature review on the subject of the Presidency by focusing on the pre-Lisbon development of its role, its influence capacity, particular hybrid nature and the conceptualisation of its role. The second part of the chapter presents the review of the scholarship on the subject of institutional change by highlighting contribution of the new institutionalist accounts. Additionally, I include insights from both the policy and institutional entrepreneurship in order to identify relevant analytical assumptions towards studying the particular impact of Member States on the role institutionalisation of the Presidency post-Lisbon.

Chapter 3 introduces the analytical framework based on the role-based model of role institutionalisation. It introduces role theory into the analysis and discusses its application towards examining the institution of the Presidency, European foreign policy and finally the institutional change. The final sections also present the methodology used for this study, in particular, the comparative case design, data collection, and the interpretative version of process tracing.

Chapter 4 – 8 present the empirical part of this research. Chapter 4 starts with examining institutional expectations towards the role of the Presidency in European foreign policy making as emerging from the analysis of the provisions of the LT. Each of the empirical chapters (5 on the Spanish Presidency, 6 on the Belgian Presidency, 7 on the Hungarian Presidency and 8 on the Polish Presidency) will start with identifying

the role preference as held by the Member State in the chair and analysing their possible sources such as national role conceptions (foreign and European policy) and expectations held towards the post-Lisbon Presidency as well as towards the individual Member States in the chair. Subsequently, at the stage of role enactment, the analysis will focus on mapping Presidency's functions performed by individual Member States. Finally, role assessment will be the key stage in assessing if the Member State in the chair managed to played its role according to its original role preference or rather role expectations, and finally if this managed to have any influence on the institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon role and institutional position of the Presidency in the area of EU foreign affairs.

In the final chapter I compare the individual Presidencies in order to identify new patterns of behaviours and functions. Upon summarising and comparing empirical findings across the four subsequent Presidencies, the level of influence of the individual Member State on the emerging role position of the Presidency will be discussed. These findings will then be referred to the evidence emerging from the literature review. By comparing the role and the position of the Presidency before and after the implementation of the LT I will be able to trace the change and continuity in the role of the Presidency, as well as its new pattern of institutionalisation resulting from the interplay between the institutional feedback of the developing post-Lisbon system of European foreign policy making (structure) and the purposive behaviour of the Member State in the chair (agent).

CHAPTER II Literature Review

This chapter aims to review the literature with reference to the CEU Presidency and institutional change in order to identify relevant assumptions on how to study the process of informal adaptation and institutionalisation of the Presidency's role post-Lisbon. First, I review academic literature related to the institution of the Presidency itself. As I noted in the introduction, with no clear functions prescribed in the LT the Presidency's role depends on the individual behaviour of the Member State in charge of this office. It is thus particularly important to examine the origins and evolution of the Presidency's role and its pre-Lisbon inter-institutional position as implementing agents might rely more on the past experience, and thus previous patterns of development and functions might re-emerge. Subsequently, I focus on the Presidency's hybrid nature, its influence capacity and the concept of the Presidency's role. This is further expanded with a section exploring possible factors behind the variation in the level of successfulness in Presidency's performance and policy entrepreneurship. Particular emphasis is placed on the literature that analyses so called 'conditions for success' and factors affecting general Presidency's performance as these might provide useful insights into studying potential variations among the performances of the Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies.

The aim of the second section is to review scholarship on institutional change in order to provide conceptual and guiding assumptions about exploring the process of role institutionalisation in the post-Lisbon context. With the system of European foreign policy making being the focus of the research, it is argued by Peters (2012) that new institutionalism might prove to be particularly useful with reference to its key assumptions that 'institutions matter', and that the policy making system is governed by formal rules of procedures, as laid down in the treaties and other legal documents, as well as by informal norms and rules of conducts (the organisational culture) that play an equally important role in shaping the functions and the behaviour of Member States. As noted by Ripoll Servent 'studying EU institutions has become almost synonymous with dealing with one form or another of new institutionalism' (2015: 6). New Institutionalism (NI) seems to offer the most promising starting point for the analytical framework. However, since the research puzzle focuses on the period of the institutional change, the choice of theory should also be dictated by its capacity to account for exploring the policy making

system during the period of institutional change, which, in this particular case, is the subsequent stage of implementation of formal provisions in practice. The latter would point to the more recent historical institutionalist approach highlighting incremental and gradual transformation of institutions, and allowing for a more active outlook of agency (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, Farrell and Héritier 2007, 2005, Héritier 2007).

2.1 The Presidency in the Academic Research

The institution of the Presidency has been subject to numerous analyses since it is usually high on the agenda in countries preparing for the Presidency. However, the research focus quickly disappears once the chairmanship is over, leaving little research that applies solid theoretical foundations. Therefore, academic research on this subject has been characterised as ‘a-theoretical and rather descriptive’ (Tallberg 2004: 1000). Except for few studies, for example by Wallace and Edwards (1976), tracing the evolution of the role of the Presidency with reference to the Council of the European Community, and by O’Nuallain (1985) analysing the Presidencies of chosen Member States, this subject did not appear in the mainstream literature on the EU until the 1990s. A particular surge of academic interest was recorded in the 2000s, and since then, academic literature has emerged in two strands. One strand deals with the institution of the EU Council of Ministers and thus only indirectly referring to the Presidency’s functions and position within the institutional framework of the EU (Sherrington 2000, Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997, Westlake 1995, Kirchner 1992). Several studies have been conducted in the form of comparative cross-countries or longitude analyses (Sherrington 2000, de Bassompierre 1998, Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997, Westlake 1995, Kirchner 1992, O’Nuallain 1985), making it possible to draw correlations between Member States, but with only limited theoretical reasoning to support it. While studying the EU Council enables the better understanding of the decision making process within the Council and the inter-institutional architecture of the European system, it tends to ignore the complex nature of the Presidency which on the one hand refers to the formal institution of the chairmanship in charge of administrative management of the Council’s legislation, and on the other to the more informally based institution held by individual Member States. The second strand of post 2000 studies have directly focused on exploring the institution of the Presidency through various theoretical lenses (Leal 2010, Bunsen 2009, Fernández Pasarín 2008b, Tallberg 2008, 2003, Thomson 2008, Wartnjen,

2008, 2007, Elgström 2006, 2003, Kollman 2003, Metcalfe 1998, de Bassompierre 1998).

More recent research has emerged in the form of descriptive evaluations of particular Presidencies' performance often with no or only limited theoretical foundations (e.g. Auers and Rostoks 2016, Högenauer 2016, Kyris 2015, Vilpišauskas 2014, Laffan 2014, Manners 2013, Christou 2013, Sundberg and Nilsson 2009, Kajnc~2008, 2009, Ferreira-Pereira 2008, Whitman 2006, Hearl 2006, Whitman and Thomas 2005, Barbé 2003, Friis 2003, Edwards and Wiesala 2000, Henderson 1998). These studies have benefited the empirical knowledge of what makes the term in the office a successful one. This is the most abundant area of studies with individual analyses being conducted after each Presidency. These evaluations are rather brief, and while they focus mostly on the fulfilment of the Presidency's programmed objectives, they also assess its reaction to unforeseen events (Lefebvre 2009). As in the previous case, the generalisability of these empirical accounts is limited, and is not the primary aim of the authors. Their greatest contribution to the field is identifying from a practical point of view the set of functions that the countries in chair are expected to fulfil.

2.1.1 The Origins and Development of the Presidency

The system of the rotating Presidency was created on the basis of the 1951 Treaty of Paris as the main working method for the institution of the Council of the Ministers for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Its initial design was characterised by two key principles: 'first that the Presidency would be exercised by the Member States (...) as a collective representative', and 'second that each country would occupy the office in turn on a basis of parity, irrespective of size, political weight or any other distinction' (Wallace 1985: 2).⁴ Its main function was to ensure coordination and communication among the High Authority and the national governments. The modest formal provisions to set up the institutional system for the ECSC meant that the system would have to develop its working arrangements in practice, and clarify the inter-institutional relations in due course of the functioning in a rather informal manner. This indicates that the original design for the Presidency assumed flexibility and further development through its institutional adaptation, which reflected the compromise achieved among the founding Member States. The creation of the Council was supposed

⁴ Presidency's functioning was also briefly stipulated in articles 26 and 28 of Treaty of Rome (1951).

to ensure institutional balance by acting as ‘a body of collective control and the centre of countries’ interests’ (Kersten 1988: 293 cited in Fernández Pasarín 2008b: 622). The working method of the emerging Council was supposed to reflect the principle of equality among the countries. The system of rotation was to ensure that every Member State stayed in the helm of the ECSC ‘on a basis of parity, irrespective of size, political weight or any other distinction’ (Wallace 1985: 2).

Over the next thirty years, the Presidency’s role developed as a result of the inter-institutional rivalry among the Council and the Commission, and the Member States’ decision to favour the intergovernmental mode for furthering of the European integration. As noted by Ludlow, ‘during the first decade of the EEC, a combination of a clear and comprehensive mandate in the treaty itself, a forceful but nevertheless politically sensitive Commission, an effective and cohesive [...] COREPER and the continued presence of some of the ‘founding fathers’ whose influence did not depend on whether or not their country held the Presidency masked the need for institutionalized political leadership within the Council and as a result delayed the emergence of the Presidency as a conspicuous player in its own right’ (Westlake 1999: 37). The fact that the cooperation at that time mostly focused on the economic issues also favoured the more technically oriented Commission. This became particularly apparent during the so called ‘Luxembourg crisis’ in 1965. Its origins date back to 1963 when the Commission presented a proposal for a new financial framework for the Common Agriculture Policy.⁵ In an effort to settle the CAP’s funding, the Commission proposed that the European Community could acquire its ‘own financial resources’. This was seen by Member States as a potential threat to the nationally located budgetary powers, and thus the subject outside of the Commission’s agenda (Dinan 2004: 104). The fact that the Italian Presidency managed to broker a compromise strengthened the position of the rotating Presidency by proving the institution’s capability of acting neutrally in compromise seeking at the European level (Wallace 1985: 3). This has been one of the clearest examples of the Presidency’s functional scope emerging as a result of the particular behaviour of a country in the chair. With the European Communities continuing to practice their policy making system, the functioning of the Council expanded, and consequently, the Presidency’s position grew accordingly both as a result

⁵ For more on this crisis see Dinan 2004: 104.

of the institutional feedback and as the entrepreneurial activity of particular countries in the chair.

The EPC launched in 1970 was placed outside of the traditional Community area, and based on the intergovernmental method of mutual consultations on issues of international concerns (Westlake 1999: 38). With no formal role envisaged for the supranational institution, its functioning was to be supplied by the Presidency of the Council. The functions mirrored the ones fulfilled by both the Council and the Commission at the communities' level (Westlake 1999: 38). In 1974, the Presidency started to act as a spokesman for all of the EPC's members vis-à-vis 'friendly' countries. The Council's portfolio expanded to handle different areas with new instruments, such as consultations, declarations and spokesman ship. The Presidency became the main actor to coordinate foreign policy issues, and thus it also became responsible for ensuring the political development of the EPC (Wallace 1985: 8). This role in foreign policy quickly became associated with the informal exercise of agenda setting. Thus, 'the growth in the scope and effectiveness of political cooperation was made possible only by the constantly increasing authority vested in the Presidency' (de Schoutheete 1988: 82 cited in Tallberg 2006: 53). These changes emerged initially as informal practices, and were subsequently formalised in the Copenhagen Report in 1973.

As argued by Wallace (1985), the 1960s and 1970s constituted 'the functional take off' of the Presidency. The position emerged as an important symbol of equality among Member States as well as the instrument of legitimisation of the European integration. The first twenty years also reinforced its 'initial institutional design' (Fernández Pasarín 2008b: 623), leading to strengthening the intergovernmental side of European governance. Nevertheless, with 'no manual of procedure for an incoming Presidency; each Presidency was free to acquit itself of the role and tasks as it saw fit' (Westlake and Galloway 2006: 327).⁶ The subsequent three decades changed the evolution of the Presidency from its intergovernmental to the more supranational function, emphasising its role of the representative of the common European interests rather than national ones. This was linked to attempts to formalise tasks associated with the Presidency across various policy areas and to end the conflicting nature of their inter-institutional relations by fostering joint responsibility to further European integration (Fernández

⁶ The Council's rules of procedure officially changed only twice in 1957 due to the provisions of the Treaty of Rome and in 1969.

Pasarín 2008b: 625). The Council chairmanship started to be perceived as more of a Community function which made it difficult for a country in the chair to balance national and European interests.

As noted by Leal the subsequent treaties (The Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Nice) ‘to different degrees, boosted the relevance of the Presidency, continuing the formalization process of some of its functions and expansion into new policy domains without, however, bringing major changes’ (2010: 58). Following the shift towards more supranational European governance, the Presidency also shifted towards its communitarian function by becoming responsible for the overall European project, its coherence and thus inter-institutional cooperation with other European institutions. In the subsequent period of the European integration, the context of discussion to reform the policy making system and thus the rotating system was to a large extent influenced by the perspective of the further EU enlargements, which lead to the failed Constitutional Treaty and the adaption of the Lisbon Treaty.

As observed by Elgström ‘the functions of the Presidency have been in continuous evolution since the birth of the EU [...] and the tasks it performs have developed gradually though creation of informal practices, which over the years has become increasingly institutionalised’ (2003a: 4). This informal institutionalisation might provide important clues for the post-Lisbon development. The expansion of functions and the increasingly central position of the Presidency developed as responses to the institutional feedback to further the scope and method of European integration and the subsequent shifts in inter-institutional balance between the involved actors. Firstly, the institution of the Presidency developed into a framework of formal and informal functions over the years; the role of the pre-Lisbon Presidency consisted of both supranational (honest brokering) and intergovernmental (agenda shaping) functions while gradually developing a greater emphasis on the supranational one. Secondly, this ambiguous role set developed as a result of the structure-based factor (the institutional feedback) and the agency-based factor (the role performance of the countries in the chair), as the country in the chair was able to emphasise some of the functions over the others according to its particular role preference. Apart from purely functional tasks such as organisational management, external and internal representation and neutral brokering among relevant actors, the Presidency also became associated with political leadership aiming to drive the European integration forward and often

being based on the efforts to reconcile European and national interests. The latter one became an important part of assessing the Presidency's performance, and the so-called 'Presidency effect' (the push to finish some legislative dossiers by the end of the six-month term) was perceived as one of the advantages of the Council rotating system (SGCa/05.2012, Elgström 2003). It is thus to be examined if the post-Lisbon Presidency would continue with the previous development patterns.

2.1.2 The Influence Capacity of the Presidency

The question of whether a Member State is actually able to influence the political agenda of the EU has been subject to extensive academic discussion. As argued before, the functioning of the pre-Lisbon Council chairmanship was regulated by a few informal rules, of which the main one was the neutrality of and the emphasis on the role of an honest broker. Since the Presidency was supposed to be neutral and impartial, any political initiative could have been seen as a breach of rules, and forcing national interests onto the agenda (Sherrington 2000, Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997, Council Guide 1996, Westlake 1995, Kirchner 1992, O'Nuallain 1985). Member States that openly pursued their national interests were heavily criticised, and thus some researchers argued that while in chair, the ability of a country was even more limited than otherwise (Whitman 1998, Schout 1998). One of the Brussels official stated that '[b]y definition, a Presidency has to suppress its national interests' (Elgström 2003: 1). This approach emphasised the supranational function of the Presidency and that it should act as the collective representative of the EU Council. Several informal constraints were identified, as far as Member States' attempts to influence the EU agenda were concerned. Some researchers argued that the ability to directly influence the agenda by introducing a concrete legislative proposal was constrained due to the short period of the Presidency (e.g. Whitman and Thomas 2005, Tallberg 2004, Kollman 2003, Scout 1998). Thus, the Member State in office was usually more preoccupied with issues on the agenda introduced by the preceding Presidencies than its own (Whitman and Thomas 2005, Tallberg 2003).⁷

Nevertheless, for most of the Member States, the six-month period served as a window of opportunity to establish itself in a privileged position to advance some of the national

⁷ The quantitative study by Thomson further proved that the Presidency's 'workload was mainly defined by the proposals introduced by the Commission under previous Presidencies, and the political progress achieved since then' (2008: 612).

interests branded as the Presidency's priorities (Kollman 2003, Kircher 1992). Most of the Member States are known for their national preferences, and during their Presidencies they focus their agendas on advancing these topics of interest in the European forum. France, Spain and Italy, for instance, are all known for their support of the Mediterranean region, Sweden of the Baltic Region and the new Member States of Eastern Europe. Some of the achievements have been substantial. During its Presidency in 2007, Portugal managed to bring two of its national interests high on the agenda with the second EU-Africa and the first EU-Brazil summits being held under its leadership (Ferreira-Pereira 2008). The French initiative adopted as the Union for the Mediterranean was the highlight of its Presidency in 2008 (Lefebvre 2009). The last Swedish Presidency focused on strengthening cooperation in the region of the Baltic Sea with a new strategy introduced in 2009 (Ryba 2009). It is possible to suggest, therefore, that the pre-Lisbon Presidency could act either as 'a silencer or amplifier of national interests' (Bengtsson et al. 2004). By taking advantage of both formal and informal powers, the Member States in chair were aiming to establish themselves in the privileged position and push for some of their national interests.

Further insights into the mechanisms of the Presidency are found in the literature on intergovernmental bargaining. European integration and particularly the International Government Conferences/Summits can be explained by applying theories of multilateral negotiations, which are widely used in world politics to explain how countries arrive at compromises (e.g. Tallberg 2010, Elgström 2006, and Metcalfe 1998). The concept at the core of such negotiations is the notion of 'the power of the chair' (Tallberg 2010, Elgström 2006). Tallberg (2010) pointed the delegation of authority to the chairmanship; the available power resources of negotiation chairs and the effects of formal leadership on multilateral bargaining as the sources of the Presidency's powers. His theory, based largely on RCI, the recent research into institutional design and principal-agent relationships in international cooperation⁸, suggested that 'the impact of formal leadership on outcomes is the product of a two-step logic, where states first delegate process functions to the chairmanship in response to specific bargaining problems, and chairs subsequently draw on privileged power resources to influence the efficiency and distributive dimension of negotiations' (Tallberg 2010: 242). This generally supports his earlier findings regarding the bargaining power in the EC (Tallberg 2008, 2004), and his

⁸ For details see Tallberg 2010: 242.

theory of the demand for and supply of a brokerage chair which stated that ‘EU Presidency possesses a set of informational and procedural resources that can help unlock incompatible negotiation positions and secure efficient agreements’ (Tallberg 2004: 999). Additionally, he argued that these privileged resources are used by Member States to secure national gain.

The two main resources available to the Presidency, and which are indispensable to conducting successful brokerage, are the access to privileged information and the procedural control (Tallberg 2010). The General Secretariat (GSC) is one of the best sources, as far as information on Member States is concerned (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006, Tallberg 2004).⁹ The Secretariat provides ‘expertise on the content of dossiers under negotiation’ (Tallberg 2010: 1003) and Member States’ position on various policy issues. Another example of the resources exclusively available to the state holding the Presidency is the possibility of conducting bilateral confidential negotiations with other Member States. The procedure of such quiet diplomacy called ‘tour des capitals’ or ‘confessionals’ has proved to be at the core of negotiation practice in European affairs (Tallberg 2010, Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006).¹⁰ Procedural control is another one of the privileges ensuing from organising and chairing every Council meeting. The Presidency practically determines what is negotiated and when (Tallberg 2004). The format of a meeting determines who is involved in negotiations, ministers or head of states, and whether it is a formal discussion or an informal talk about the possibility of working out a compromise (Tallberg 2004). The final available procedural resource is called ‘the Presidency compromise’ (Tallberg 2004). A Member State in chair can propose its own text of a legislative initiative as an alternative to the Commission’s text. Since voting is not a very frequent procedure in the Council, and is often replaced by the informal expression of a lack of objection, it is thus easier to achieve the adoption of legislation than in the more formal process involving the Commission (Tallberg 2004). Thus, the Member State in the chair of the pre-Lisbon Presidency had an access to a number of formal and informal resources.

⁹ The main task of the GSC is to gather information on Member States regarding their preferences and negotiation tactics. It also provides knowledge and support for the state in chair as far as the complex decision-making process in the Council and the EU are concerned (Tallberg 2010, Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006).

¹⁰ The research by Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (2006) on the Italian and Irish Presidencies revealed that small Member States are usually more willing to use diplomatic measures than to ‘flex their muscles’ and they are more aware of national sensitivities through the additional information provided by the Secretariat.

Tallberg (2003) expanded the notion of the Presidency's policy entrepreneurship Presidency by introducing the term of agenda shaping. The Presidency's influence on the European agenda can be thus distinguished by three strategies: agenda-setting (introduction of new issues onto the policy agenda), agenda-structuring (the emphasizing or de-emphasizing of issues already on the agenda) and agenda-exclusion (the active barring of issues from the policy agenda). Each of these strategies enables a Member State to directly and indirectly use the Presidency as a chance to adjust the general agenda to its own priorities. Some case studies have shown that the period of adapting a new policy initiative can be more or less effective, depending on whether it is on the Presidency's agenda of the country in chair (Schout 1998, Wurzel 1996). Advancing or delaying the adoption of initiatives on the EU agenda has been seen as one of the most common strategies used by Member States.¹¹ The tactic of delaying the adoption of initiatives is also known as agenda-freezing (Sierra 2002).

Thus, acknowledging that Member States see the Presidency as their main opportunity to promote national interests and influence the EU agenda is a widely recognised privilege. The issue that empirical evaluations have mainly focused on is the content of each Presidency's agenda e.g. Lefebvre 2009, Hearl 2006, Barbé 2003). The choice of the agenda's objectives is very careful, and usually aims to reflect wider European issues, as 'the closer the agendas (EU Presidency) the better the outcome of the Presidency' (Henderson 1998: 4). As suggested by Sierra's (2002) study on the Spanish Presidency, it is easier for a Member State to achieve a meaningful result when both national and European interests in the subject are high on the political agenda. Consequently, as argued by Schout 'national interests can find a legitimate and acceptable position on the Presidency agenda and may lead to new initiatives or debates within the EU' (1998: 4). The system of the rotating Presidency has been seen as generating 'an impetus that concentrates the energies of each successive Presidency and thus provides the essential drive for making progress and achieving results' (Bengtsson, Elgström, Tallberg, 2004: 16). Thus 'neutrality is undesirable' (Schout 1998: 3). In addition to this, Kollman argued that such a system helped for new solutions and initiatives to be introduced 'that might not be discovered or tried under other procedures' (2003: 53). Thus, being in power for the period of the EU Presidency enables Member States to use their privi-

¹¹ One of the examples was dropping the subject of energy liberalisation from the agenda during the French Presidency in 2000 (Kollman 2003: 57).

leged position in European affairs to advance national priorities. This influence capacity has been captured by Simone Bunse through the concept of policy entrepreneur, which seems to offer additional insights by capturing the Presidency through its hybrid nature as a combination of formal and informal powers (2009: 4).

2.1.3 The Presidency's Hybrid Structure

There have existed two main perspectives on how the Member States perceive their six-month period of the Council chairmanship. Firstly, following the traditional rationalist approach, it is assumed as an opportunity to influence the European agenda according to the national preferences, and the Member State in the chair behaves strategically in order to achieve its priorities ('the logic of consequentiality'). Secondly, following the constructivist approach, the Presidency is seen as the function of the Community, and thus the Member State in the chair following on the expectations of other actors focuses on securing compromises in the pursuit of the European interest ('the logic of appropriateness'). This further reflects the dichotomy of 'the neutral brokering' versus 'national preference projection' presented earlier, with reference to analysing the Presidency as either a supranational or intergovernmental function.

Some approaches towards studying the Presidency have been trying to bridge the rather artificial rationalist versus constructivist division by analysing the Presidency as either the 'silencer or amplifier' of national preferences (Bengtsson et al. 2004). They conceptualise the Presidency as a hybrid comprising of both supranational and intergovernmental functions (Wallace 1986, Kirchner 1992, Ludlow 1993, Schout 1998, Westlake 1999, Fernández Pasarín 2008b, Bunse 2009, Leal 2010). This is further explored by Simone Bunse in her research on the EU governance of small Member States in chair of the Council Presidency (2009). By applying insights from new institutionalism, the author elaborates on the concept of the Presidency as a 'policy entrepreneur' possessing additional formal, but most of all informal powers that enable the shaping of the EU agenda.

The emphasis on the Presidency's schizophrenic nature (both empowering the Member State with additional resources but at the same time constraining its behaviour by generally acknowledged rules of conduct, such as honest brokering) also attempts to bridge the traditional divide between rationalist and constructivist accounts. Analysing the Presidency as a hybrid function which both empowers and constrains the Member State

in the chair, seems to be a more promising approach for the purpose of this research; the Presidency can then be captured as ‘a complex role in which responsibility and opportunity are present at the same time’ (Fernández Pasarín 2008b: 619). Such an approach allows for exploring powers available for the Member State in the chair to exert potential influence on the process of shaping the new role for the Presidency while still accounting for a set of informal rules which have been identified as shaping the Member State’s behaviour in the chair. In an attempt to continue with the recent developments, a bridging approach towards categorising the Presidency as either an intergovernmental or a supranational institution is adopted by applying such an analytical framework that incorporates insights both from new institutionalism and role theory. This thesis continues with the application of role-based approach into studying the institution of the rotating Presidency (Leal 2012, Elgström 2006); however, a distinctive model will be proposed in order to capture the institutional change of this institution (as presented in Chapter 3).

The above analysis clearly demonstrates that the opportunity to influence the European agenda according to national preferences has been associated with the exercise of the Presidency. This agenda setting powers have never been officially sanctioned as one of the Presidency’s functions; nevertheless, it was informally associated with the expectations of the Member State to exert some sort of political leadership. Simone Bunse’s (2009) book on the small states’ leadership through the Council chairmanship on the EU governance has been one of the most advanced studies in theoretical terms on the influence and leadership capacity of the Presidency. By introducing an institutionalist concept of the term ‘policy entrepreneur’, the author explored the influence of the Finnish, Belgian and Greek Presidencies across various policy areas (see figure 1).

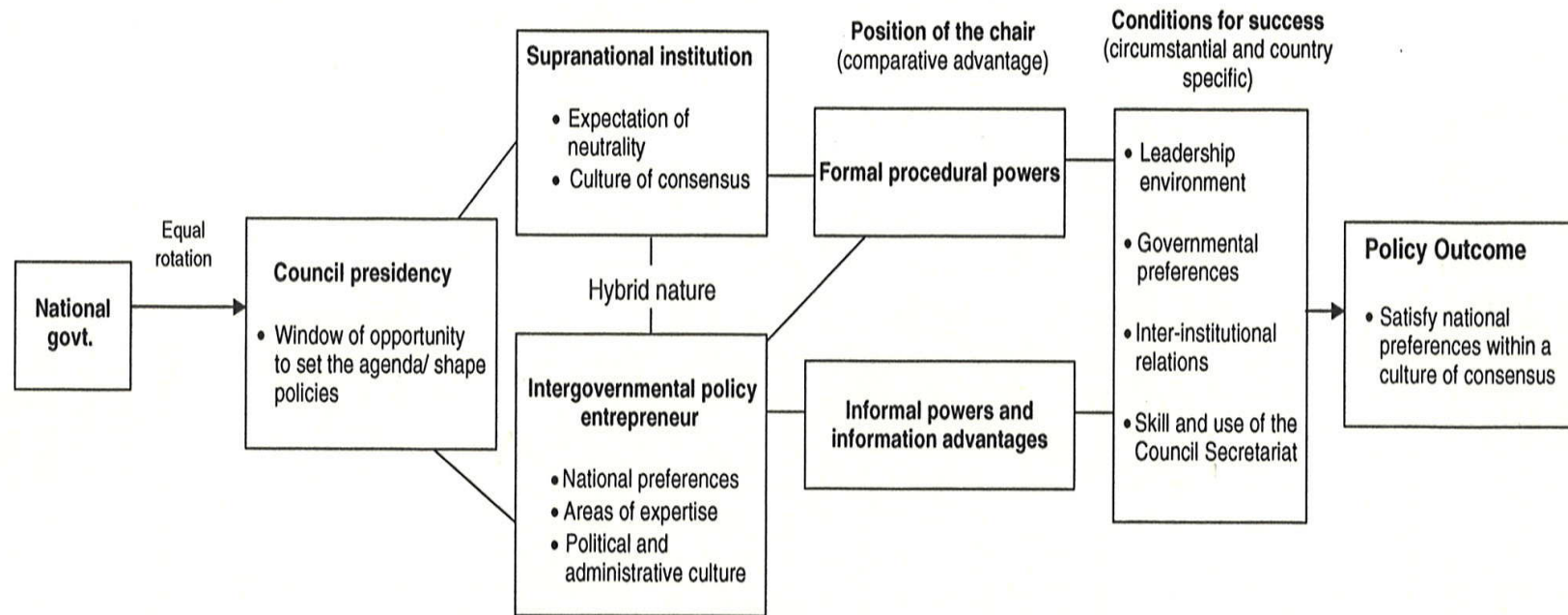


Figure 1. The Presidency as Policy Entrepreneur (Bunse 2009: 72)

The application of the term of policy entrepreneurship has become prevalent across European studies, even though it was mostly used in cases of the Commission's role as a policy agenda setter. Such an approach made it possible to trace the impact of the Commission on policy formulation (Kaunert 2010a, Kaunert 2010b, Dür et al. 2010, Peterson 2008, Kaunert 2007, Moravcsik, 1999, Pollack 1997, Laffan 1997) by pointing to its influence capacity grounded in the available resources. As noted by Bunse, the subject of policy entrepreneurship with reference to the Council has been largely ignored.¹² As presented within the debate on 'neofunctionalist versus intergovernmental' approaches, neofunctionalism understands supranational entrepreneurship as the main factor that shapes the EU decision making process, while intergovernmentalism perceived its importance as 'greatly exaggerated' (Bunse 2009: 42). However, the application of this concept might prove to be more suitable to capture the interplay of informal and formal venues for policy making that existed within the Council and the broader system of EU foreign policy making. By framing the influence capacity of the Presidency within the institutionalist concept of policy entrepreneur, Bunse portrays the Council Presidency 'as a hybrid or 'double hatted' policy entrepreneur that attempts to influence the EU agenda and shape policy outcomes according to domestic preferences while at the same time advocating consensus (2009: 71, see figure 1).

Consequently, policy entrepreneurship does not only refer to strict agenda setting – understood as an introduction of a new policy initiative onto the agenda – but also to influencing through management and mediation, and to proposing possible solutions to emerging issues and potential compromises (Bunse 2009). This is based on the access to privileged resources, namely information and expertise, and on states' reputation and mediation skills (Moravcsik 1999), thus reflecting the Tallberg's concept of agenda shaping. The relative power stems more from the informal rather than formal powers and consequently, the exercised influence is channelled more informally through raising the awareness, launching discussions and through mobilising support for the preferred solution (Moravcsik 1999). As demonstrated earlier, the Presidency has been traditionally engaged in agenda shaping in a rather informal manner mostly due to the neutrality rule, but also due to the lack of extensive formal resources. Thus, the subsequent appli-

¹² Except for Schmidt's research on the informal practices of the agenda setting by the Council. For details see Schmidt, S.K. (2001) 'A constrained Commission: Informal Practices of Agenda-Setting in the Council', in Aspinwall, M. and Schneider, G. (eds.) 'The Rules of Integration, Institutional Approaches to the Study of Europe, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

cation of the institutionalist concept of policy entrepreneurship to the case studies of the Finish, Belgian and Greek Presidencies enabled Bunse to capture the influence of individual Member States on the European agenda by distinguishing between formal and informal levels of policy making, available resources and agenda setting venues.

It seems that the hybrid nature of the Presidency combining both intergovernmental and supranational dimensions of policy making offers relevant insights into the influence capacity of the Presidency by bringing together both formal and informal dimensions and powers as available to Member States in the chair.

2.1.4 Explaining Variations in the Presidency's Performance and Influence Capacity

As stated in the Presidency Handbook, the Presidency should be impartial, neutral and efficient (cited in Schout 1998: 1). As pointed out by some of the authors, the Member State in the chair should be guided by common European interests and achieve results accordingly (Elgström 2003, Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997, Kirchner 1992, Wallace 1985). The Member State in chair should be impartial and neutral with reference to the interests of other Members, but most importantly to its own interests; as Schout stated: '[p]artiality destroys the credibility required for the mediation role, and a long and controversial national agenda will make constructive cooperation from the other Member States less likely' (1998: 4). In order to achieve results in negotiations among other states, the Member State in chair needs to be perceived as impartial – as an honest broker, to gain trust among negotiating states and propose a fair compromise. Some of the characteristic features of the Presidency, such as its rotating character, enforce the need to be a neutral leader (McKibben 2007).

However, the Presidency in the role of a political leader is expected to move the European project further in its integration and bring some tangible results, usually understood as the achievement of priorities set in the individual Presidencies' programmes. The subtle balance between neutral and ineffective performance is difficult to manage. Member States are often criticised for being either too ambitious or not ambitious enough. Moreover, the success of the whole Presidency used to heavily depend on the organisation and on the results of two EC's summits (Schout 1998). As noted earlier, this resulted in the development of the Presidency as a complex institution with number of rules and functions that were in conflict with each other (Schout 1998). Even though

theoretically a Member State is supposed to be neutral, it has already been acknowledged that Presidency is an important chance for bringing national interests to the European level. The Member State in the chair should strive ‘to make sure that the delicate balance of being impartial and pushing national interests is achieved’ (Schout 1998: 6). This dichotomy between being effective yet ambitious, between fulfilling the function of a neutral broker as well as political leader has emerged as one of the key issues in assessing the Presidency performance (Elgström 2003b: 201) .

Since it is not a question of whether the Presidency has the ability of agenda shaping, it is rather an issue of how Member States handle their national interest while holding office (Tallberg 2004). As mentioned before, the open pursuit of national interests is generally seen as greatly inappropriate. There is, however, a range of informal tactics available to Member States: they can, for example, use other EU institutions or coalitions of Member States as points of initiative (Maurer 2008). Presenting a subject of national importance as a vital European interest is a must (Closa 2002). As can be seen from the above analysis, promoting national interests is not an easy task and it requires skilful diplomacy and an in-depth knowledge of policy making for a country to succeed. However, as noted by most of the authors, individual Presidencies vary with reference to their performance and assessment, but also, once they decided to engage in exercise of policy entrepreneurship some Member States are more successful than others. This prompts the question of why some Member States decide on the risky venture of agenda shaping and what factors explain variations in the actual performance. The subsequent section will explore the factors affecting both the Presidency’s performance and its influence capacity.

There is general agreement in the academic literature that the Presidency’s performance is conditioned by a range of factors, and that their analysis might provide useful ways to understand the variations among individual Presidencies. As noted by Closa (2002), these factors can be generally divided according to the level of their manageability. In some analyses, these factors are referred to as ‘conditions for success’ as their effective management can increase the influence capacity of the Member State in the chair (Bunse 2009). These might affect the ways in which individual Member States define their role preference and how they subsequently enact those (Leal 2010, Elgström 2003).

In their research, Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (2006) distinguished three main factors that enable the successful holding of the Presidency: knowledge and understanding of the EU (both process and content expertise) and information on Member States' preferences and strategies; the political credibility and reputation of the government holding the Presidency (honesty, impartiality but also political reputation); and finally, the general orientation of the government in chair towards European integration (this helps to facilitate cooperation with other Member States). Bunse (2009) in her research on the leadership and entrepreneurship of small Member States grouped these conditions for success under four main categories: the leadership environment; the heterogeneity, intensity and distribution of governmental preferences in the Council; inter-institutional relations with the Commission and the EP, and the office holder'. In general, these factors can be further categorised into structural and individual; however, this distinction is perceived by Leal as rather artificial, as 'mutual relation holds between many' (2010: 187).

Among the factors at the agential level, one of the most important ones is the level of preparation and the domestic political situation. Lack of national support and unity can undermine the position of the government as seen in the example of Italy, and its inconsistent approach during its Presidency in 2003 (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). The example of the Irish Presidency of 2004 showed the advantage of having wide national political support as the main premise for consistent and efficient behaviour during the whole period of the Presidency. Since all of the political parties in Ireland are 'europe-anised' there is an ideological divergence with reference to EU matters (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). For this reason, it was easier to achieve consensus as far as European affairs were concerned. As Finn and Berenice Laura Laursen observed, in Denmark, the Presidency was seen as an important 'national job' and therefore the opposition decided to give the government full support during the Presidency' (2003: 7). Adopting an internal agreement on political unity and consensus has become one of the most common practices to prevent opposition from undermining the government's position on the European stage (Kajnc̃ 2009). Member States should also be aware of the political situation in each country as for example approaching parliamentary elections could put some debates on hold (Closa 2002, Friis 2002), or just distract the government from the European mission by campaigning at the national level.

Secondly, efficient management and administration are seen as key in fulfilling the rest of the functions (Vanhoonacker, Pomorska, Maurer 2010, Maurer 2008). As mentioned before, the Presidency's administration tasks require extensive human resources and effective administration at the national level. There is not a single strategy for the internal organisation of the Presidency. Thus, the Italian organisation was usually less formal and relied on the extensive socialisation of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representative Office with its European counter partners (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). Civil staff, who are usually much more experienced, and thus more socialised into the European context, were used for day-to-day management. Italian politicians and national elites were only involved in official Council meetings and summits (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). Consequently, the management of administrative and politically relevant issues was much more effective than brokering during the Intergovernmental Conferences while dealing with sensitive and difficult topics. In contrast to the Italian example, the Irish structure during its last Presidency was more formal with the MFA taking the lead and the REPER increasing in size to reflect the government structure of ministries representing major policy areas in the Commission. The main Irish priority was to maintain close relations with the Commission and Member States to deal with crises before they emerge as publicly controversial (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). Good contacts with European institutions have been seen as particularly important for a smooth performance during the Presidency (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997). Small Member States have been seen as more successful in pursuing European Presidencies than large ones (Bunse 2009, Elgström 2003). They have fewer human resources and need to rely more on European resources, particularly on the Secretariat's expertise and extensive information (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). They are under more pressure to build extensive networks to facilitate information exchange and negotiation (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006).¹³

One of the factors that affects the Presidency even before it starts is the reputation that the Head of State of the presiding country has had among its European peers. During the negotiations on the Constitution text in 2003, the low opinion of the diplomatic

¹³ On the other hand, as mentioned previously, although Germany is one of the largest Member States and mostly relies on its own resources, it is still known for its excellent style of management: close cooperation with the preceding Presidency, realistic timetables, early communication, confident leadership styles that does not allow discussions to get out of hand (Maurer 2008). Extensive diplomatic relations and strong position among other Member States have been seen as additional advantages of being a large Member State (Maurer 2008, Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006).

skills and expert knowledge of the Italian PM, Berlusconi, negatively affected the brokering capabilities of the whole Italian team (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006). Even though the PM was perceived as neutral and impartial, he was not able to broker a deal between countries. In contrast, the Irish PM, due to his favourable reputation, managed ‘to steer a middle path between existing vested interests of 25 Members’ (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006: 357). He proved his position as a neutral broker from the very beginning by clearly stating the positions favoured by the Irish and proposing to make concessions in order to meet the demands of other Member States. It has been argued that small countries are usually seen as neutral as they do not have many national interests at stake (e.g. Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006).¹⁴

Fourthly, the political view of the government on the subject of European integration has also been identified as a factor affecting a Member State’s performance (Closa 2002, Elgström 2003, Bengtsson et al. 2004). The content of the agenda and level of engagement during the Presidency varies depending on whether a country is a strong supporter of the federalist or supranationalist forms of integration. Moreover, the general foreign policy strategy and special relationships with countries outside the EU also influence a Member State’s performance in its function as an external representative.¹⁵ Additionally, pragmatic alliances within the EU have an impact not only on the effectiveness of achieving the agenda of the Presidency but also on the style in which the office is held.¹⁶ At the European level, the relationship between France and Germany is argued to have an impact on the style of the Presidency of other Member States. According to Pedersen (2002), a very close relationship between France and Germany caused by the Iraq war resulted in the general facility of achieving agreements in other areas. He further argued that ‘Presidencies are strongest in periods when the Franco-German relationship is in trouble and the Commission is weak’ (2002: 299). It is possible to argue therefore, that the internal situation between other European institutions and

¹⁴ The French Presidency of 2008 was ambitious in its priorities and external relations. Similarly to the Italian Presidency, the French one was also dominated by the personality of the main leader, Sarkozy, and conducted mainly with the use of national resources (Dehousse and Menon 2009). This Presidency further confirmed the general trend that tense relations with European institutions and disregard for small Member States occur more often when large Member States are in charge (Dehousse and Monon 2009, Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006).

¹⁵ The Atlanticist orientation of Greek foreign policy played an important role in its response to the crisis caused by the Iraqi conflict. Greece abandoned the role of the honest broker and sided with some of the Member States in favour of the invasion of Iraq (Dimitrakopoulos and Passa 2003).

¹⁶ The personal dislike between Anzar and Schröder resulted in several disputes during negotiations on the Agenda 2000 (for details see Closa 2002).

bilateral relations among the largest Member States has had an influence on the Presidency's performance.

It usually falls to the Member State in chair to finish agenda of the preceding Presidencies, and the priorities of the previous Presidencies can have an uncontrollable impact on the current Presidency. One such example was the UK Presidency in 2005, where the overall evolution of the time in the office was dependent on reaching an agreement on the Financial Perspective for 2007-2013 which was an issue initiated by the Luxembourg Presidency (Whitman and Thomas 2005). The British government, for whom the problem centred on its rebate and views on the Common Agricultural Policy, was trying to postpone the discussion until after its Presidency, but '[o]ther Member States and the European Commission did not allow the issue to fall off the Presidency's' (Whitman and Thomas 2005: 6). The difficult negotiations and compromise-seeking by the proposal of concessions from the British side managed to secure the deal and as a result 'the UK received grudging approval for its achievements' (Whitman 2006: 62). Taking over unfinished agendas can have either negative or positive consequences, and for this reason, a country in chair should become actively involved in the Council forum before the official start of its own Presidency. Because factors beyond the control of a state in chair can greatly influence a country's Presidency, the management of unforeseen events should be included in the Presidency's strategy.

At the international level, the external situation can have a negative effect on the Presidency's evaluation, as in case of the Czech Presidency. Its condemnation of the Israeli attack without consultation and against the opinion of other Member States caused a crisis within the EU. With reference to large Member States, such international crises usually have a positive impact, as these countries are able to show their international reputation and ability to deal with crises. This was the case of the French Presidency and its ambitious manner of dealing with the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2007 (Dehousse and Menon 2009). Large Member States are also more likely to sideline the Presidencies of other Members when the subject of high politics is in place, as they consider it their prerogative (Pedersen 2002). Moreover, international events can strengthen some of the national priorities by opening a window of opportunity at the European stage. For example, Spain managed to upload one of its top national priorities, the anti-terrorist policy in the context of post-September 11th attacks (Barbé 2003, Closa 2002).

Drawing on the above assumptions, it is possible to outline important general conclusions with reference to expectations held towards the Presidency's performance by analysing which Member State is in the chair. Big Member States tend to pursue more assertive Presidencies with greater focus on promoting national interests, while small Member States prefer a more supranationalist approach prioritising the Presidency as a Community function. This can be further influenced by the ideological stance of the government, and its stance on the pace and the extent of European integration. Therefore, Member States favouring the intergovernmental method will perceive their Presidencies as both European and national opportunity, while countries favouring the federalist approach will refrain from promoting national initiatives and give up their national positions for six months.

The above analysis of factors fits into scholarship explaining the Presidency's behaviour and thus variations among Presidencies by focusing on Member States' particular characteristics (Elgström 2003). Role theory approach seems to provide a more in-depth explanation of the variations between Member States regarding their approach towards the Presidency (Leal 2010, Elgström 2006). In this thesis, these variations have been generally attributed to various national role conceptions held by Member States with reference to their foreign and European policies (e.g. Leal 2010). As argued by Leal, in order to better understand the variations between the Presidencies, and how the Presidencies' roles are formed, it is not only necessary to look at the levels of role conception and role expectations, but also to look inside the role conception and explore the sources of these roles (2010: 176). This was earlier noted by Elgström country characteristics, its culture, historical experiences and domestic political factors can influence 'the way rational actors perceive the state's policy interests or to shape the role conceptions and the exceptions of appropriate behaviour by member states' (2003a: 10). This approach draws on Holsti's original research carried out in 1970. He saw the origins of the national role conception as the results of socialisation, but also shaped partly by history, culture and societal characteristics (Aggestam 2004a: 65), and also by 'location and major topographical features of the state; natural, economic and technical resources; available capabilities; traditional policies; socio-economic demands and needs as expressed through political parties, mass movements, or interest groups; national values, doctrines, or ideologies; public opinion *mood*; and the personality or political needs of key policy-makers' (1970: 246). As demonstrated by Holsti, these sources of role have indirect effects

on role conceptions being feed through role expectations. As pointed out by Leal, these factors do not necessarily have to mediate through role expectations, they rather have direct influences on role conception (2010: 177-8). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that these sources arise from domestic and structural factors, as explained by Wish: ‘decision makers consider their national capabilities when formulating their national role conceptions, which in turn provide guidelines and standards for their foreign policy behaviour. Thus, national attributes provide a major source for the formulation of national role conceptions’ (1987: 96).

Recent strands of role theory are characterised by attempts to capture factors influencing foreign policy making at the level of Member State by exploring both domestic and structural factors. The complex issue of the actor’s bounded intentionality is reflected in the notion of ‘situated actor’ (e.g. Aggestam 2004). Breuning argues that agents, understood both as an individual and as a group, ‘are embedded in the social and cultural institutions of the states they represents as foreign policy decision makers’ (2011: 16). These institutions have shaped their perceptions and their understanding of the world events, as well as their behaviour in response to these. Role theory highlights the intentionality of the actor to shape the structure and associated with this structure’s roles.

In her research on the Portuguese Presidency in the area of European Crisis Management, Leal presented a comprehensive overview of the possible sources of the Presidency’s role. Even though it was ‘fine-tuned’ by the author to fit the area of the crisis management policy, the overview can easily be adjusted to fit the broader area of European foreign policy making. Leal divides the sources according to two main levels: the structural level, namely the specific policy area and the institution of the Presidency itself, and the agential level which focus on particular characteristic of particular Member States in the chair.

- Unforeseen events and crises (expected contingencies) [cf. section 7.2]
- Structural level [cf. section 7.1]:
- [EU]/CM:
- [Broader international security context and] EU's (global) ambitions and goals in crisis management + policy record
 - Other EU CM actors, their competencies, functions and preferences (rivalries)
 - Crisis Management policy instruments
 - Crisis Management decision-making procedures
 - Crisis Management resources
- PRES:
- Main legal characteristics, formal functions, and resources of PRES
 - Other informal or traditional rules and functions
 - PRES policy-making tools
- Actor-level [cf. sections 7.3 and 8.1]:
- International reputation and status
 - National attributes, namely related to its identity and culture (values and ideas, history, type of society, domestic political context), and especially those related to crisis management
 - General approach to the EU context (e.g. pro-integration?) and to the PRES, especially preparation, experience (previous PRES?), and expertise (knowledge of policy area/specific issues)
 - Political priorities: national interests and PRES goals
 - Material attributes (or resources) for PRES (incl. financial and human resources, namely the PRES Team and especially individual chairpersons)

Figure 2. The Overview of Sources of Presidency's Roles in Crisis Management (Leal 2010: 191)

This thesis will build on this recent approach towards exploring variations among the chosen Member States by looking at their distinctive national role conceptions in their foreign and European policies (Leal 2010, Elgström 2003). However, some of the earlier identified factors might also have potential impacts on the Presidency's performance and its influence capacity regarding the Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies. These will be taken into account as intervening variables as operationalized in Chapter 3. Even though the research on the influence capacity of the Presidency has been limited in its focus to the agenda shaping of national preferences, it still provides useful insights when analysing the process of role institutionalisation.

2.1.4 The Concept of 'Role'

This section will briefly analyse the notion of 'role' in the research on the Presidency. As Leal pointed out, the concept of 'the Presidency's role' 'tends to be defined in functional terms', which involve analysing it through the framework of tasks and functions that are expected to be performed while in the chair of the Council chairmanship (2010:

30). As noted by Elgström the Presidency's functions are 'factual functions rather than formal' as they based rather on 'established praxis' than legal obligations (2003a: 4). While different authors distinguish different tasks (as presented in Table 1), these can be summarised under four main functions:

- (1) ensuring the administrative and organisational coordination of the work in the Council, and acting as an internal representation of the Council within the institutional system of the EU (organisational management); (2) brokering and providing agreement among Member States; (3) representing the EU externally in international relations, and finally, (4) policy entrepreneurship/political leadership.

Author(s)	Presidency's functions
Kirchner (1992)	administrative, initiating, co-ordinating, representational
Westlake and Galloway (2004)	manager, political initiatives' promoter, package-broker, honest broker, representative to and from the other Community institutions, spokesman for the Council and the Union, international actor
Hyes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006)	business manager, manager of foreign policy, promoter of initiatives, package-broker, liaison point, collective representative
Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (2006)	business manager, mediator, political leader, internal and external representative
Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006)	organizer/task oriented leadership, broker/group-oriented leadership, political leadership/transformational leadership, representative of national interests or positions
Tallberg (2008)	agenda management, brokerage and representation
Kietz (2008)	manager of Council affairs, neutral mediator and broker of compromises, strategic guidance, source of initiatives and impulses, external representation of the EU, representation of the Council to other EU institutions and internal representation within the Council

Table 1. The Overview of the Role of the Presidency in the Academic Literature (Author's Own Compilation Based on the Literature Review)

Further insights into this subject have been introduced by Schout and Vanhoonacker's (2006) study on the Presidency's functional management. By applying a framework based on examining demand and supply for specific roles the role assessment of the Presidency depends on the most suitable supply of a particular role/function in a particular context; while in the chair, the Member State needs to continuously decide if in a given time it should act as a broker, a political leader or the defender of national interests. This decision is largely influenced by various external (e.g. if the topic under discussion is old or new, sensitive or not; if there is lack of trust in the chair or there are multiple brokers) and internal factors (e.g. how important is the topic under discussion for the chairing country, if there is commitment from senior management or politicians, if a country is well prepared, if there is sensitivity between partners in the government). Different factors will result in different roles demanded at a given time. However, in order to understand how Member States decide which role to play, further mechanisms need to be taken into account, such as rationality, institutional expectations, political EU pressure and personal experience. As argued by Maurer, such an approach allows for a more in-depth and extensive evaluation by furthering the understanding of both external and internal influencing factors the Member State in the chair and its performance (Maurer 2008).

A more in-depth outlook on the concept of role with reference to the Presidency is provided in Ole Elgström's edited volume 'European Union Council Presidencies: A Comparative Analysis' (2003). The functional understanding of this role is expanded by the application of the rationalist and sociological perspectives, thus aiming to explain the actual behaviour of the Member State in the chair with reference to their decisions associated with the Presidency's functions. In his article, 'The Presidency: The Role(s) of the Chair in European Union Negotiation', Elgström defines the concept of role as 'patterns of expected or appropriate behaviour' (2006: 172). Elgström explores the Presidency's performance through the lenses of sociological institutionalism. By building on the insights from role theory the author offers an explanation of variations among Member States while in the office of the Council chairmanship, and argues that 'existing structurally based expectations are brought to the office by individual Member States to produce both common features and variety in role performance' (2006: 171). Leal's concept of role is conceptualised as 'a pattern of behaviour associated with a certain position (...) entailing specific rights, duties and functions, even if can supplement

these with more discretionary activities' (2010: 174). Such an approach does not assume the element of appropriateness in understanding the Presidency's role.

The research on the role of the Presidency has expanded from the purely functional understanding of the role of the Presidency as a set of functions the Member State in the chair is tasked with into a more role theory-based understanding of it as a pattern of behaviour resulting from the interaction of expectations and the purposive decision of the actor in charge of this role. The latter conceptualisation allows the perception of the institution of the Presidency as a set of functions that are performed according to the particular role preference held by individual Member States. This understanding makes it possible to overcome the limitation of studying the Presidency's role either according to the logic of appropriateness or the logic of consequentiality as identified in the literature review.

2.2 New Institutionalism

The particular interest in institutions and their effect on the actors' behaviour and the wider international structure emerged as a prominent academic area of interest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,¹⁷ gradually leading to the development of the theory of institutions, called old institutionalism. The renewed interest in institutional variables as an explanatory factor in political science grew from the dissatisfaction with the expanding behaviourist theories in the 1950s and 1960s (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 1). This interest was mostly triggered by the research of James March and Johann Olsen, and their argument that organisational and institutional settings should be brought to the centre of research pointing in particular to the role of values and norms and thus undermining the emerging, and at that time largely 'individualistic, and largely utilitarian, assumptions and methodologies' (Peters 2012: 25). By emphasising the issue of 'bounded rationality', they introduced the logic of appropriateness as a concept providing the context of behaviour for the agency (Peters 2012: 29). The acknowledgment that 'institutions matter' and that they shape the behaviour of actors embedded in the international system, triggered the further development of this theory and the emergence of NI. As argued by March and Olsen, institutions emerge as the key factor shaping political action and change in the contemporary political system (1995, 1989).

¹⁷ Steinmo (2010) argues that HI existed long before the phrase started to be used pointing to Aristotle's *Politics* or Madison's work (for the list of the remaining authors see Steinmo 2010: 2).

NI aimed for a more comprehensive account of institutional settings, with the sociological institutionalist definition of the institution highlighting a more informal side of institutions. The definition expanded to include a variety of both formal and informal norms and rules governing the organisations. Therefore, explaining the behaviour of actors as well as policy outcomes would be a result of the overall ‘rules of the games’ employed in a given organisation (Rosamond 2003: 114). The latter institutionalist approach seems to be particularly useful when applied to the institution of the Presidency, since it allows taking into account general Presidency’s functions as well as individual Member States’ performance which are both embedded in the EU context governed both by formal and informal rules. Informality constitutes an important part of the Presidency’s culture, both empowering the Member State in the chair with additional resources as well as constraining it with the established rule of acting as a neutral broker.

NI does not constitute a single unified theory; it is usually perceived as three separate strands: rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism. These strands ‘paint quite different pictures of the political world’ (Hall and Taylor 1996: 1). So far, the latter study ‘Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms’ by Hall and Taylor has provided the most comprehensive overview of these approaches, focusing both on their distinctiveness with reference to how institutions originate and develop, and also on what kind of influence they have on actors’ behaviour. These three approaches take ‘different positions on such fundamental issues as whether the identities of the actors can be given exogenously to the institutional analysis and whether it makes sense to assume a homogenous kind of rational or strategic action across cultural setting’ (Hall and Taylor 1992: 22). This is because they are rooted in different epistemological foundations, highlighting various aspects of the agency-structure relationship which in turn offer different assumptions with reference to the process of institutional change.

2.1.1 Rational Choice Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism

The difference between the three main strands of NI can be captured merely by looking at how each of these strands understands the very concept of ‘institution’. Thus, for RCI, institutions are purposively established rules which are agreed among rational actors in order to establish a stable and efficient framework for their interaction (Stacey and Rittberger 2003: 867; see also Thelen 1999: 371). Institutions are thus the main tools for solving collective action problems; their existence is preserved when they pro-

vide actors with more benefits than costs, thus leading to the development of a particular equilibrium (Warleigh 2002: 8). This argument closely follows the ‘logic of consequentiality’, as institutions are instrumentally established and used by actors to fulfil their interests. They are not capable of influencing actors’ strategic choices and they remained controlled by actors (Warleigh 2002: 9). The original preferences held by actors, and the outcomes expected by the actors, are the core of the actor’s instrumental rationality. Institutions exist as long as they fulfil their role of lowering the costs of solving collective action problems (Hall and Taylor 1996: 943, Shepsle & Weingast 1987). Therefore, once the institution has ceased to provide the most effective solutions, it ceases to exist or undergo institutional change (Stacey and Rittberger 2003: 867). Such a functional approach seems to offer the most probable explanation for the limiting of the role of the Presidency, as it has often been seen as the main reason for the inefficiency and incoherence of the EU’s performance in its external relations.

Sociological institutionalism offers a broader understanding of what constitutes an institution: ‘institutions are conceived as a Gestalt of symbols, rituals, beliefs and worldviews which allows actors to understand – or interpret – the context in which they find themselves’ (Warleigh 2002: 9). By emphasising informal rules and the socialisation effect of organisations, sociological institutionalism demonstrates how actors choose their behaviour pattern on the grounds of perceived appropriateness. Because interests and identities are endogenously produced as a result of the interaction between actors and institutions, the latter have an influence on reshaping the former (Checkel 2000). Institutions have a two-fold effect: firstly, by serving as the ‘normative dimension’ they provide the cognitive scripts, categories and models that set the frames for the actor’s behaviour; and secondly, they are vital because ‘without them the world and the behaviour of others cannot be interpreted’ (Hall and Taylor 1992: 15).

Cognitive processes such as learning and socialisation, which take place during the interaction between actors and institutions, result in the reconstruction of the actor’s interests and preferences, and subsequently might lead to a change of identity (Hall and Taylor 1992). This argument reflects well the socialisation effect of the Presidency, which is often referred to as a ‘membership test’ for new Member States. SI thus reflects the ‘logic of appropriateness’, underestimating the fact that actors can use the institutions instrumentally in order to advance their interests. It presents a rather one-sided view of the motivation behind actors’ behaviour. SI conceptualises institutions as socially con-

structured reflections of cultural understandings and, more generally, ‘of the way the world works’ (Thelen 1999: 386). It thus acknowledges the coexistence of formally established institutional frames and more informal building blocks such as ‘the symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the “frames of meaning” guiding human actions’ institutions (Hall & Taylor 1996: 947). As argued before, this allows for a comprehensive outlook of an institution as well as accounting for the possible influence institutions can have on what is perceived as acceptable behaviour, but also on actors’ preferences and even their identities (Hall & Taylor 1996: 948).

These two approaches also differ with reference to their explanations of how institutions come to exist. For RCI, institutions are ‘the outcomes of purposive actions by instrumentally oriented individuals’ (Powell and DiMaggio 1991: 8). They are created in order to increase the efficiency of mutual interaction among the actors. Sociological institutionalists argue that the emergence of new institutional frameworks occurs not to provide greater efficiency, but to ‘enhance [the] social legitimacy of the organisations or its participants’ (Hall and Taylor 1996: 949); or in other words, to better reflect the values and organisational culture of the institution. The debate between these strands of new institutionalism reflects to some extent the ongoing constructivist-rationalist debate.

The application of RCI to this case study seems limited as the focus in RCI is on the formal rules. European foreign policy making has been, to a large extent, governed by informally developed rules, such as the ‘culture of consensus’. The institution of the Presidency, with few formal functions laid down in the official European documents, has been mostly ruled by informally developing rules and norms of conduct perceived as patterns of appropriate behaviour. SI might prove particularly useful with reference to the latter point, by highlighting the existence of patterns of appropriate behaviour. However, it struggles to explain institutional change. As stated by Hall and Taylor, according to SI ‘institutions are resistant to redesign ultimately because they structure the very choice about reform that the individual is likely to make’ (1992: 8). The research puzzle of the changing role of the Presidency might thus be better addressed by the tool box offered by HI.

2.1.2 Historical Institutionalism

HI has been built upon structural functionalism in that political organisations are seen ‘as the principal factor structuring collective behaviour and generating distinctive out-

comes' (Hall and Taylor 1992: 6). From the group theories HI incorporated the notion of group conflict and an assumption that the actor is capable of structuring this conflict's character and outcomes (Hall and Taylor 1992: 6). It thus emphasises 'the asymmetries of power associated with the operation and development of institutions' (Hall and Taylor 1992: 7). It has been held to offer a bridging approach between RCI and SI, as it 'tends to conceptualize the relationship between institutions and individual behaviour in relatively broad terms' (Hall and Taylor 1992: 7). This allows both potential explanations to be included in the analysis: instrumental rationality – perceiving 'actors as strategic, seeking to realize complex, contingent and often changing goals' (Hay and Wincott 1998: 954), and the cultural approach, which sets off premises for the socialisation process.

Most of all, HI focuses on 'the effects of institutions over time, in particular the way in which a given set of institutions, once established, can influence or constrain the behaviour of the actors who established them' (Pollack 2004: 139). It therefore shares some assumptions with SI, such as the influence of the shaping capacity of the institution on the preferences of the involved actors. The creation of institutions is built upon previous institutional settings and once it is established it is perceived as prior to any actions of the agents (Steinmo 2010). Thus, in order to understand how institutions work it is necessary to take into account the original decisions establishing these institutions and to trace their subsequent implementation in the process of historical development. Identification of the original interests – as reflected in the foundation of the institutions – is necessary to identify their cultural and ideological foundations.

HI, following recent attempts to offer a middle ground approach with reference to the definition of the institution, has advocated a wider understanding that encompasses both formal and informal rules and norms. As argued by Thelen and Steinmo 'the emphasis on institutions as patterned relations that lies at the core of an institutional approach does not replace attention to other variables - the payers, their interests and strategies, and the distribution of power among them. On the contrary, it puts these factors in context, showing how they relate to one another by drawing attention to the way political situations are structured.' (1992: 13)

The historical institutionalist perspective aims to offer a comprehensive framework which would be capable of exploring the variety of rules, norms and expectations asso-

ciated with the institution of the Presidency. It seems that through the application of historical institutionalist concepts such as ‘institutional feedback’, ‘critical juncture’ and ‘path dependency’, the impact of the institutional change on the position and functions of the Presidency can be further accounted for. The following section will analyse the historical institutionalist tool box and clarify the concepts used. This will lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of the post-Lisbon role development of the Presidency.

The concept of path dependency serves as the main explanatory element of HI. Nevertheless, its variety of definitions, starting with the very broad view that ‘history matters’, means that a clear understanding of the concept needs to be supplied before assessing what it might be able to contribute to the empirical analysis. For Sewell, the logic of path dependency is simply that ‘what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time’ (1996: 262-3). Some authors have taken this definition further by exploring how the previous decisions affect the direction in which institutions develop. This is where the concept of increasing returns proves its usefulness by explaining how the institution follows path dependency; as explained by Levi (1997: 28) ‘path dependence has to mean, if it is to mean anything, that once a country or region has started on a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice’ (1997: 28). Levi uses the example of a tree to better explain path dependency: ‘from the same trunk, there are many different branches and smaller branches. Although it is possible to turn around or to clamber from one to the other – and essential if the chosen branch dies – the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow’ (Ibid.).

In this way, HI emphasises the stability of institutional developments by emphasizing their continuity within the same path and the reinforcement of the original design in the aftermath of the institution’s establishment. It refers to standard operating procedures, behavioural norms, worldviews, or collective interests that are associated with a particular institution (Weingast 2005). Institutions, their working procedures, norms and organisational structures, are thus a result of a development triggered by the original founding decisions. The latter factor limits the options available for actors, as ‘choices made at a particular moment eliminate a whole range of possibilities from later choices while serving as the very condition of existence of others’ (Hay and Wincott 1998: 955). By

emphasising the effect of initial choices leading to institutions' creation and subsequent institutional inertia, HI perceives institutions as constraining actors more than enabling them. As one decision leads to another, it reinforces the direction in which the institution is already developing. This explains why institutions continue on their paths of development, since the costs of going back or departing from the regular path would be too costly for the involved actors. Additionally, HI explains how positive feedback mechanisms reinforce the distributive power relations within institutions: 'rules generate consequences that, over time, enhance the power resources of their advocates and broaden supporting coalitions' (Jacobs 2010: 96). Therefore, path-dependency can be fostered by mechanisms of self-reinforcing positive or negative feedback.

Yet institutional development often follows a path of unintended consequences, meaning that it does not follow according to the initial design envisaged by the founding members. This is particularly visible in the example of the EU as presented by Rosamond: 'the institutional architects of the Community made their decision to formalize integration on the basis of particular motivations and preferences. But, the very act of creating a particular sort of institutions, with identifiable competencies and powers, unleashed logics that could not necessarily be predicted at the time.' (2000: 117)

The notion of critical juncture is the historical institutionalist response towards the issue of institutional change. It is referred to as the period when, due to external events, the development of the institution is interrupted. According to Mahoney 'a contingent event is (...) an occurrence that was not expected to take place, given certain theoretical understandings of how causal processes work' (2000: 513). Streeck and Thelen have highlighted that most of the institutionalist scholarship focuses on institutional change thorough 'a strong punctuated equilibrium model' which emphasizes long periods of institutional stability interrupted by short periods of exogenous shocks resulting in changes in institutional settings (2005: 1). As pointed out by Hall, however, the concept of critical juncture points to institutional change but does not provide any analytical assumptions as to 'how institutions emerge from the disequilibrium' (Hall 2010: 205, Thelen 2004, Mahoney and Thelen 2010). As Pierson further elaborates, 'any new equilibrium may be as likely as any other' (2004: 143-4). Thus, traditional historical institutionalists did not offer any insights into 'the black box' of the critical junctures, and thus failed to explore how institutions emerge from such periods of change. It has long been argued that all strands of NI are better equipped to explain continuity rather than a change in institu-

tional system.¹⁸ HI better accounts for how the continuation of institutions demonstrates its resistance to change. The role of agency is perceived as limited due to the past decisions determining the scope for subsequent actions, thus removing some possibilities.

In order to deal with this inability of the institutionalist accounts to explain institutional change, some recent strands have shifted focus from these large, external event-based changes onto studying more gradual and endogenous transformations of institutions. Thus, RCI tried to frame an endogenous change as a result of endogenous shifts of interest-based preferences, and SI as a result of changes in the cultural and behavioural frames. As the following analysis will demonstrate, the newest historical institutionalist analyses seem to offer the most promising avenues for a more comprehensive exploration of institutional change through their incorporation of constructivist insights. The particular emphasis on the subsequent adaptation of formally ambiguous provisions enables the analysis to account for both formal and informal processes of institutional change, while the greater focus on ideas introduces a more active agency into the traditional structurally deterministic explanations.

2.1.3 Towards Endogenous and Incremental Institutional Change

‘Institutionalism has been developed in part to explain the persistence of institutions, but that strength has also been its weakness’ (Peters 2012: 183). As argued above, most of the studies on institutional change tend to prioritise large scale shifts in exogenous conditions as a key factor leading to radical changes in institutional set-up, thus overlooking a more incremental change through gradual institutional transformation. Historical institutionalists in particular pointed to the added value of expanding the notion of institutional change to account for more incremental and gradual internal processes. Mahoney and Thelen suggested that path-dependent lock-in is a rare phenomenon’ (2010: 3). They also noted that smaller gradual changes might accumulate over time into a large reformation of the institution (Mahoney and Thelen 2005). In their study they noted that ‘the ongoing worldwide liberalization of advanced political economies (...) evolves in the form of gradual change that takes place within, and is conditioned and constrained by, the very same post war institutions that it is reforming or even dissolving’ (2005: 4). This highlights the fact that institutional change may happen without the presence of large exogenous shocks, and that ‘gradual transformative change’ might

¹⁸ As argued by Schmidt this refers to the fact that institutionalists definitions of institutions emphasise their static functions as the very constitutive elements (2011).

provide a better explanation for changes in political economy. As the authors argued ‘there often is considerable continuity through and in spite of historical break points, as well as dramatic institutional reconfiguration beneath the surface of apparent stability or adaptive self-reproduction, as a result of an accumulation over longer periods of time of subtle incremental change’ (Mahoney and Thelen 2005: 8). By introducing ‘incremental creeping change’ they managed to move the institutional analysis beyond the punctuated equilibrium models (Mahoney and Thelen 2005: 9).

The mechanisms seen in the traditional HI might also be a source of gradual change. Positive feedback as a result of learning might result in an informal development of knowledge, thus fostering institutional change (Cowan and Gunby 1996). This was further confirmed by North (1990), who applied the concept of path-dependency in order to demonstrate how incremental change is a consequence of gradual learning. Overall institutional change depends, then, on the subsequent small modification of institutional settings which are a consequence of the choices of individual actors and entrepreneurs of organizations on the basis of improved information feedback from the environment. North not only pointed to learning as a mechanism behind the gradual institutional change but also identified the correlation between formal and informal rules (North 1990: 140). These small initial changes can get ‘locked in’ through positive-feedback loops or increasing return effect, resulting in major institutional change (Pierson 2004). In addition, Pierson (2000) pointed to more time-stretch processes, such as cumulative causes, threshold effects and causal chains, as leading to institutional change through a gradual path-dependency not necessarily involving critical junctures.

As pointed out by Héritier ‘a change may be designed intentionally on a large scale in a process specifically foreseen for that purpose and then be followed by a period of only incremental adjustments to new conditions and relative stability’ (2007: 1). As further noticed ‘these incremental changes extending over a longer period of time (...) may amount to substantial institutional changes’ (Ibid.). In the case of the EU, this might result in further sovereignty transfers to the supranational level. These changes can be either formal (through legal ruling) or informally developed on the basis of everyday practice (interregnum integration). The latter would be developed by institutions, rather than Member States (Stacey and Ritterberg 2003: 863). As formal provisions in the form of ‘grand designs’ are usually quite limited in their substance, their implementation is usually followed by the emergence of more informal institutional rules. Héritier

accounted for this by developing the concept of ‘incomplete contracting’ (2007). Caporaso (2007) and Hart (2006) both argued that institutional rules are generally incomplete, as even formal rules, when applied in practice, must be interpreted and enacted. This requires some flexibility and informal judgement of the rule implementer (Hart 2006: 30). The research of Farrell and Héritier (2007, 2005) further explores how role ambiguity and subsequent implementation triggers institutional change with reference to the EU system.

The study by Mahoney and Thelen (2010) demonstrates some recent attempts to better incorporate agency into the institutional analysis by applying HI to study institutional change through exploring reasons why actors obey or ignore rules. This allows the analysis of institutional change to expand by including rules, norms and practices and how they produce self-reinforcing institutions. As argued by Thelen (2009), institutional change can occur in an endogenous and incremental manner through ambiguities between a rule and its interpretation and enforcement. The informal institutional adaptation of the formal provisions can serve as a vital intermediate role in explaining the process of the institutional change. Mahoney and Thelen identify the change as emanating ‘from inherent ambiguities and ‘gaps’ that exist by design or [which] emerge over time between formal institutions and their actual implementation or enforcement’ (2010: 19). Therefore, institutions ‘are the object of ongoing skirmishing as actors try to achieve advantage by interpreting or redirecting institutions in pursuit of their goals, or by subverting or circumventing rules that clash with their interests’ (Ibid.).

With regard to EU governance, Farrell and Héritier (2003) explain the concept of incomplete contracting by highlighting the increasingly complex agenda of the EU, and the particular context of negotiations over institutional rules, which are usually rushed through with last-minute adjustments, and formulated in numerous languages. Also, the ambiguity of the rule might be designed on purpose in order to accommodate political differences between Member States in order to offer a compromise solution. Subsequently, ‘institutional rules are not infrequently ambiguous, and individual participants can, in effect, take advantage of this ambiguity to redefine the institution *on the fly*’ (Jones 2001: 194). Héritier, using the theory of the distributional version of rational choice institutionalism, assumes that this period following the formal, often ambiguous, change may trigger a period of re-bargaining in which institutional rules and inter-institutional relations are reassessed (2007: 8). Subsequently, her study applied the con-

cept of incomplete contracting to explore inter-institutional adaptations of institutional rules, and to demonstrate the shifts in distributive consequences and shifts in power among various EU institutions. This was further confirmed by Naurin and Rasmussen's research (2011), which demonstrated that EU institutional bodies adapt to the changing opportunity structures emerging after implementation of the formal provisions. Such an approach enables the traditional external dimension of institutional change to be complemented by a more internal one. This combination of both micro and macro perspectives results in 'the combination of (...) preferences and the institutional context that determines the intra-institutional outcome' (Naurin and Rasmussen 2011: 7). The institutional context emphasizes that institutional implementation 'do[es] not take place in a vacuum in the EU system, but are often reactions and adaptations to opportunities and constraints created at the inter-institutional level' (Naurin and Rasmussen 2011: 13).

In their special issue on 'Dynamics of formal and informal institutional change in the EU' (2003) the authors, Jeffrey Stacey and Berthold Rittberger outlined an analytical framework based on both 'history-making integration' – this being a result of formal bargaining at the highest political level – and 'interregnum integration' – the result of more informal adaptation and bargains of EU actors in the aftermath of the implementation. By applying this framework to analyse the construction of the CEU, Lewis (2003) attempted to provide a more comprehensive explanation for the complexity of the Council as a hybrid institution of both intergovernmental and supranational function. With the formal rules laid down in the subsequent treaties, the Council was established as an intergovernmental institution; however, only by complementing the formal dimension with the informal one is it possible to account for the Council's supranationalist functions, which developed during the interregnum integration as a result of the increasingly collective and highly socialised nature of the cooperation (Lewis 2003: 1014).

Mahoney and Thelen argue that 'institutional change often occurs precisely when problems of the interpretation and enforcement open up space for actors to implement existing rules in new way' (2010: 4). This opens up analysis on more dynamic accounts of agency by introducing 'change agents' as capable of triggering incremental transformation of institutions. The scholarship on role ambiguity and the subsequent institutional adaptation assumes that this ambiguity will be used by actors who aim to maximise their competences in the new institutional setting (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, H  ritier 2007, Farrell and H  ritier 2007, 2004, Stacey and Rittberger 2003). As further pointed

by Farrell and Héritier, 'Treaty rules may prove more difficult or complex to implement *ex post* than they appear *ex ante*' (2007: 228). This might result in a conflict over the interpretation 'in which the distinct bargaining strength of actors will be instantiated in expectations over outcomes and thus, over time, in patterns of choice over existing institutional rules or in the emergence of new informal institutions' (Ibid.)

Jacobs defines these change agents as 'actors disadvantage[d] by the institutional system and thus seeking to modify their positions by advocating new set up' (2010: 96). As argued by Mahoney and Thelen, the window of opportunity created by the need to ensure interpretation of the formal rules might turn into a conflict 'with different groups deliberately exploit[ing] ambiguities and press interpretations that favour their interests' (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 11). This is further highlighted by Héritier's research into the EU comitology and codecision rules; based on the theory of power-based distributive bargaining it is assumed 'that actors are competence maximizers that whilst seeking to increase the efficiency of an institutional rule also try to ensure that a policy will be enacted through procedures which maximize their own degree of control over the process of policy-making' (2012: 40).

This recent strand looking into the incremental and gradual transformation of institutions seems to provide useful insights into studying the informal adaptation of the Presidency's role in the aftermath of an incomplete formal change. The scholarship on institutional change has been shifting towards a more endogenous perspective, with a focus on subsequent adaptation and informal rule development, as a result of deficiencies of formal provisions. Combining both formal and informal dimensions might result in a more comprehensive picture of institutional change. Often the institutions are designed in a rather general manner, so their implementation allows for more flexible adaptation of the written provisions in practical situations. This is the case with the LT and in particular the institutions of the Presidency, in which further developments in the post-Lisbon context might take on a life on their own. However, even if this literature provides important insights into studying influence and leadership capacity at the agential level, the assumption of interest-driven actors does not fit into previously defined assumptions with reference to the foundations of the behaviour of the Member States in the Chair, which are both value and interest driven.

Another attempt at endogenizing institutional change within the institutional approaches shifted the focus to ideas and discourse. As noted by Vivien Schmidt ‘discursive institutionalism’¹⁹ ‘is an umbrella concept for vast range of theories in political science that take account of the substantive content of ideas and the interactive process by which ideas are conveyed and exchange[d] through discourse’ (Schmidt 2010: 3). As noted by Bell, this new institutionalist turn allows for a less constraining outlook on institutions, putting ‘interpretative agents operating in relatively fluid ideational and discursive contexts to explain institutional change’ (Bell 2011: 883). This outlook, also referred to as constructivist institutionalism, turns institutions into ideational construct (Peters 2012: 75). Hay (2006) noted that this approach is particularly suited to use the concepts of ideas as an explanation for endogenous institutional change. Moreover, the shift towards a more ideational level of analysis allows for framing institutions as ‘simultaneously constraining structures and enabling constructs of meaning, which are internal to ‘sentient’ (thinking and speaking) agents whose ‘background ideational abilities’ explain how they create and maintain institutions at the same time that their ‘foreground discursive abilities’ enable them to communicate critically about those institutions, to change (or maintain) them (Schmidt 2008 cited in Schmidt 2010: 4). Thus ideas are both ‘cognitive ideas justified in terms of interest-based logics and necessity (e.g. Jobert 1989, Hall 1993, Schmidt 2002) and normative ideas legitimated through appeals to values and appropriateness (e.g., March and Olsen 1989, Schmidt 2000)’ (Schmidt 2010: 3). The institutional change thus results from the changes of ideas and values through discursive mechanisms (Peters 2012: 120). The latter allows for the acknowledgment of policy entrepreneurs as important catalysts for change (Peters 2012: 120). Nevertheless, it has been argued that these approaches ‘place almost all explanatory weight on agency and lose sight of institutions’ (Bell 2011: 891). This results in the exclusion of structural considerations (Peters 2012: 75). Therefore, this is the least structured version of new institutionalism and ‘provides the greatest ambiguity (and the greatest range of action) for members of institutions conceptualized in this manner’ (Peters 2012: 114).

It seems that historical institutionalists grant enough acknowledgements to the role of an active agency, as actors are perceived as capable of learning from the past experience

¹⁹ As Schmidt pointed out various authors focusing on the role of ideas and discourse in institutional change differ on conceptualising their approach, for example Blyth 2002 refers to ‘ideational turn’, Campbell and Pedersen 2001 to discursive institutionalism, Hay ideational institutionalism (2001) and constructivist institutionalism (2006).

and this subsequently allows for trigger institutional change (Bulmer 1998). Critical junctures shake the foundations of institutional frameworks and deflect them from their previous path dependency. It is in these instances that actors can become more active and take part in shaping the undergoing institutional alteration. They might want to seek maximisation of their power positions within the institution, but they also seek to adapt the normative foundations to reflect their individual preferences (Mahoney 2000). With the new ideas introduced into the institution the result might be a radical change of the previous culture. For the change to last, it needs to become rooted in the ideational foundations of the institution as a part of the legitimatisation process (Mahoney 2000).

From the above analysis of the new institutionalist scholarship on institutional change it seems evident that HI offers a bridging framework between institutional stability and change, pointing to gradual transformation resulting from endogenous adjustments as well as accounting for both structural and agential levels of analysis. Bell argues that HI, combined with a constructivist approach, can offer ‘a more rounded account of how interpretative agents interact dialectically with institutional and wider structural contexts and produce change’ (2011: 884). Thus, as Schmidt (2011) noted, introducing ideas as explanatory factors allows agency back into historical analysis. This enables analysis of Member States in the chair of the Presidency as institutionally embedded active and interpretative agents.

The issue of the ambiguity of formal rules and its impact on institutional change emerges as one of the key issues of this thesis. Sheingate (2010) argues that most of the formal institutional rules are ambiguous and this ‘provides critical openings for creativity and agency’ (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 12). The subsequent interpretation of rules might have an impact on the further development of the institution. However, as noted by Sheingate, this ambiguity ‘invites conflict and contestation as actors struggle over the meaning, application, and enforcement of formal institutional rules’ (2010: 169). As noted above, such an approach can lead ‘to an overly muscular account of agency’ (Sheingate 2010: 170). There is thus a need to introduce a more balanced outlook on the interaction and mutual influence of agency and structure in which the agency is embedded. According to Sheingate, institutional theory should thus aim ‘to understand how rule ambiguity provides opportunity for creative leeway at the same time that actors remain tethered to the institutions they inhabit’ (2010: 170). One such example has been the scholarship on institutional entrepreneurship, which argues that ‘the powerful actors

play a causal role in the emergence of new institution' (Lamberg and Pajunen 2010: 815). Such research has emerged from the intersection of entrepreneurship scholarship and institutional theory, and has been attracting increasing academic attention (Aldrich 2011, Philips and Tracey 2007, Tollbert et al. 2001).

The analytical assumptions provided by this chapter will be further used to operationalize the research puzzle by introducing into the analysis a role-based model of role institutionalisation. The concept of critical juncture emerges as the most effective way of focusing the analysis on the periods of institutional change. The LT's provisions have reshaped the system of European foreign policy making and dramatically changed the context of the Council chairmanship by limiting its role. Nevertheless, HI seems to be less applicable when explaining the process of institutional change, as it does not offer theoretical hypotheses with reference to pointing to a particular direction of the institutional development in the aftermath of a critical juncture. The pre-Lisbon Presidency's role evolution emerged to a large extent as a response to the institutional feedback as well as some entrepreneurial activity of individual Member States in the chair. Therefore, in order to understand the process of role institutionalisation of the Presidency, the analysis should be undertaken at the exact interaction of two levels: the structural level of the post-Lisbon system of European foreign policy making and the agential level of the Member State in the chair of the Presidency. The latter will be explored by incorporating a role theory approach which aims to explore the individual behaviour of the Member States in the chair, possible variations between their role preferences and finally their impact on the emerging position and functions of the post-Lisbon Presidency. Role scholarship assumes the existence of 'extraordinary moments' which are defined as times of structural change during which 'the role set is likely to become unstable, leading to a redefinition of roles and intensification of learning and socialisation processes, as agents become more open to adopting different norm sets and different practices' (Flockhart 2011: 98). Therefore, 'such moments may leave the existing rules and institutions intact or lead to transformation, adaptation, or breakdown' (Ikenberry 2008 cited in Flockhart 2011: 98). The analytical framework incorporating the insights of NI and role theory is expected to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how the Presidency's role in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making has developed as the result of the interaction between agency (role making) and structure (institutional feedback).

CHAPTER III Towards a Role-Based Model of Role Institutionalisation

The main aim of this chapter is to present a role-based model of role institutionalisation in order to analyse the institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency's role. In the first part, I present a brief review of role theory and its application to IR and FPA, and in particular, its contribution to the study of EU foreign policy making. Subsequently, I explain how insights from role theory, in particular, the concepts of role making and role institutionalisation, are used to inform the empirical analysis. The final part will present the methodological implications of using an interpretative research approach and the particular research design applied to study the process of the informal adaptation of LT's rules with reference to the functions, inter-institutional position, and patterns of behaviours associated with the Presidency in post-Lisbon European foreign policy making.

The following section will present the origins and the overview of the development of role theory by exploring its multidisciplinary nature.

3.1 Role Theory, International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis

Role theory is based on the basic assumption that social life is structured around characteristic behavioural patterns, associated with particular social positions, which are the result of actors' expectations towards own behaviour and those of other people (Biddle 1979). Although it was initially developed as an approach within psychology and sociology, it quickly proved useful for studying national foreign policy making. Its application to FPA was triggered by Holsti's article (1970) in which he transferred the sociological approach of analysing the characteristic patterns of behaviour, conceptualised as national role conceptions, into analysing how states perceive and enact their foreign policy. Holsti's main argument was that a country's performance 'may be explained primarily by reference to the policy-makers' own conceptions of their nation's role in a region or in the international system as a whole' (Holsti 1970: 240). Roles as 'policy-makers own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state, and the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system' (Holsti 1970: 245-6). He analysed statements of policy-makers and, based mostly on an inductive approach, he identified and created a typology of 17 national role conceptions. This approach, focusing on the ego

part of roles, was then extended by Walker (1987, 1978) and Wish (1980); it constituted an early attempt to incorporate role analysis into FPA and IR.

During the Cold War, the confrontational character of the relations between the US and the Soviet Union limited role analysis to reflecting the ideological dichotomy in their role prescriptions in IR, while political science continued with the application of role theory to study decision-making process at the national level. The former strand, based on the relative stability of the East-West division, resulted in a rather static view of national role conceptions. Early applications of role theory mostly took the form of attempts to transfer the conceptual language of role theory. Their primary focus was on exploring sources of national role conceptions and testing their effect on the actors' behaviour in foreign policy (for example Le Prestre 1997, Wish 1980, Walker 1978). Therefore, role theory developed mostly within FPA and was concentrated within American academia (Thies and Breuning 2012: 2). The influence of a country's identity and the importance of ideational factors reinforced the development of role theory in the 1990s as a result of developments in the field of IR (Thies and Breuning 2012: 2). The epistemological division between role theory grounded in IR and FPA resulted in the emergence of two main strands of role theory: one based on psychological premises and emphasising the agential level (FPA), the other more rooted in structural theories (IR). These two remained discrete (Harnisch 2011, Keating 2009). The latter, mostly developing in the US, highlighted the stability of the roles and the actors' material or cognitive traits as the determining factors shaping their behaviour, thus closely reflecting the positivist approach. The former started to gain popularity within European and international academia, and focused on a constructivist understanding. It emphasised the role of language and social interaction and analysed how roles provide 'reasons for actions' (Thies and Breuning 2012: 3). This division has been well reflected in the debate on the nature of the roles' sources and to what extent they are domestic or international.

The traditional role-based approach focused on examining the foreign policies of states through their understanding of the international system and their perceived role within it. Recent approaches have moved their analytical focus to the domestic level, focusing on the formation of role conceptions at the national level (Brummer and Thies 2014, Wehner and Thies 2014, Kaarbo and Cantir 2013). On the other hand, some research has shifted the focus to the level of increasingly complex and integrated external relations. As noted by Harnisch et al. roles can also help 'to explore the patterns and evolu-

tion of international social order' (2011: 2). This order is 'the result of myriad interactions between actors trying to enact their foreign policy roles – be it within institutional contexts, multilaterally, bilaterally and unilaterally' (Ibid.). Role theory thus proves to be useful in studying international relations. For example, the concept of role change has been conceptualised as a response to the states' membership of various organisations. The issue of regional, but most of all European integration, has allowed for a more dynamic role analysis. In the field of European Studies role theory was originally applied by Lisbeth Aggestam to studying the foreign policy making of the UK, France, and Germany. This approach was then used to study the EU role in international politics in the book edited by Elgström and Smith (2006). Moreover, and what seems to be particularly useful for this research, a role-based framework was applied to study the institution of the Presidency by Elgström (2006) and Natalia Leal (2010). Their study sought to explain variations between Presidencies held by the individual EU Member States. Additionally, the recent edited volume by Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank and Hans W. Maull provides further insights into the conditions facilitating role change at the level of role conceptions of both states and international organisations, in particular with reference to the EU (Bengtsson and Elgström 2011) and NATO (Flockhart 2011). This has been further developed by Harnisch (2012) in an article aiming to incorporate the literature on role theory and learning in foreign policy by exploring the concept of role making. These recent contributions to role theory seem to be of particular relevance when studying the process of role institutionalisation in the post-Lisbon Presidency.

In the early 1960s Biddle concluded that 'role theory, as a set of unified positions, does not presently exist' (1961: 191). The lack of a unified theory or universal application was further highlighted by Below (2015), Harnisch (2011a: 7-8), Nabers (2011: 75) and Thies (2009: 4) more than forty years later. It has been argued that role theory still lacks a clear and comprehensive framework; as commented by Searing 'what is usually called role theory are frameworks consisting of topics, concepts, and assumptions' (1991: 1243). As argued by Sarbin and Allen the noun 'theory' is used 'to denote a set of propositions employing a consistent idiom that guides the search for facts' (1968: 489). However, this does not undermine the analytical strength as 'the test of a scientific theory, of course, is not whether it is true but whether it is useful' (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 489). Thus, role theory is not a theory but rather an approach applying a unified set of concepts and assumptions about actors' behaviour. In a simplified version, role theory

argues that humans behave in different ways that are predictable depending on their social identities and situations (Biddle 1986: 68); in other words, ‘the role performance of individuals is shaped by the expectations and behaviour of others’ (Magid 1980: 312). However, over the last few years the renewed interest in role-based research has provided further clarifications into the analytical foundations as well as the methodological implications of applying a role-based approach to study the behaviour of states at the international level as well as the formation of role conceptions at the level of a state (Beneš and Harnisch 2015; Wehner 2015; Thies 2014, 2013; Wehner and Thies 2014; McCourt 2014, 2010; Guzzini 2013, Kaarbo and Cantir 2013; Walker 2013).

Searing has argued that because of its widespread and universal applicability such an approach might be applied to any area of research involving human behaviour, and that as a result, any attempt to create a single role theory might not be desirable (1991). In his study, he identified three main strands of role theory: structural, interactional and motivational. Each of these strands present different visions with reference to agency-structure relationship; thus ‘the structural approach highlights connections between institutions and roles, the interactional approach focuses on the process through which roles are learned, and the motivational approach focuses on the content of roles, particularly on the goals and incentives that drive them’ (1991: 1244). Starting from the original contribution by Holsti, Mead’s symbolic interactionism became one of the key sources for role scholarship. In his empirical research Holsti downplayed the structural sources of roles, arguing that ‘the expectations of other governments, legal norms expressed through custom, general usage, or treaties, and available sanctions to enforce these are ill-defined, flexible, or weak compared to those that exist in an integrated society and particularly within formal organisations’ (Holsti 1970: 243). This was addressed by Walker, who highlighted the analytical value of including the structural sources of the role (external expectations) by introducing the concept of role prescription into his empirical research (1978, 1987). His definition of role referred to ‘repertoires of behaviour, inferred from others’ expectations and one’s own conceptions, selected at least partly in response to cues and demands’ (Walker 1992: 23 cited in Thies 2013: 30). Thies thus identified three approaches: structural, functional and organisational which highlighted ‘the individual as representative of a social position, while symbolic interactionist and cognitive approaches focus on the individual as a person’ (2013: 30). The influence of Mead’s ideas – also with reference to the structuralist aspects – has also

been fully acknowledged by Harnisch. Role theory has thus been positioned in the middle ontological spectrum between individualism and structuralism. Role theory's interpretative approach focuses on interpretative knowledge by identifying meanings attributed to national roles by the decision-making elites. As argued by Hopf 'interpretivists rely on reconstructing the intersubjective meaning of the structure for the subjects of the interests' (2007: 640). Such an approach enables understanding of how people make sense of their social context and through these interpretations help to understand their behaviour. It opens the 'black box' of domestic process and aids understanding decisions from the standpoints of the decision-makers by reconstructing their reasons' (Hollis-Smith 1990: 74).

This research will follow the interpretative and interactional strand which allows for a more middle ground approach by focusing on the interactive processes between agency and structure in order to better account for structural, domestic, ideational and material factors. Application of the role theory approach will thus aim at demonstrating that structure and agency presuppose each other and that these two are mutually constitutive (Sewell 1992).

The earlier lack of conceptual clarity in role theory's application can be addressed by clearly outlining and defining relevant concepts; this will be thus the subject of the next section.

3.2 Key Concepts

As argued before, the multidisciplinary nature of role theory and its application to various research areas has resulted in various methodologies being produced. This might have impacted on role theory insofar as it has sometimes been perceived as conceptually confusing (Leal 2010). Nevertheless, it seems that a fair consensus exists with reference to the core role concepts, the relations between them, and their particular empirical applications.

The notion of role has been widely applied to study functional aspects of both states and various international organisations. These early attempts were rather instrumental in using this notion without clearly defining what was meant by the concept of 'role'; therefore, the concept might have been perceived as lacking precise meaning (Jackson 1972 cited in Aggestam 2004a: 63). Sociological role theory was one of the first attempts to infuse the concept of role with a more analytical dimension. This approach was original-

ly adopted from the field of teatrology by comparing an actor within the international social system to an actor performing on the stage according to a concrete script (Bradbury et al 1972 cited in Aggestam 2004a: 56, Sarbin and Allen 1968: 488-9). This script, which provides guidelines on the kind of behaviour which is associated with the particular context, reflects what the actor has learned previously regarding what kind of behaviour s/he should perform 'to comply with the rules of the game' (Bradbury et al 1972 cited in Aggestam 2004a: 63). Therefore, the concept of role represents 'a two-way process between structure and actor' (Hollis and Smith 1986: 285).

More recently, Elgström and Smith have defined roles as 'patterns of expected or appropriate behaviour' (2006b: 5). Some authors, however, have argued for a more neutral definition that incorporates characteristic patterns of behaviour associated with a specific position held by the actor or a specific context regardless if it is perceived as appropriate or not (Jackson 1972, Biddle and Thomas 1966, Singer 1965). This debate reflects the ongoing division between the structural and motivational researchers: the former see roles as 'constructs that are maintained by institutions and have little to do with individual preferences' (Homans in Searing 1991: 1245); the latter define roles as 'sets of informal rules created and recreated through interactions, especially through negotiations between individuals and their associates' (Handel, Meltzer, Petras and Reynolds in Searing 1991: 1246). As argued by Searing, both of these strands underappreciate 'individual preferences, incentives and calculations (1991: 1246). Therefore the third strand, the motivational one, aims at capturing the role as 'the part that one plays in an event or process' (Searing 1991: 1248). As further argued by Searing: 'to reconstruct such roles satisfactorily, it makes good sense to try to understand them as they are understood by their players, as dynamic interactions between rules and reasons, between institutional constraints and individual preferences' (1991: 1248).

The driving forces behind role theory are role conceptions. These are defined as sets of norms expressing expected foreign policy behaviour and a country's performance on the international stage. They constitute a 'road map' that policy makers use to simplify and understand complex social and political reality (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 3). This concept refers to both the ego- and alter-side of the actors and thus is usually divided into national role conceptions and role expectations (Biddle and Thomas 1966). The former focuses the analysis on the actor's self-understanding of his role – on his subjective perception of how he should behave. As noted above, the structuralist approach to-

wards role theory was challenged by Holsti, who conceptualised the actor as being capable of holding multiple roles and thus of emphasising one role over the others. Holsti's understanding of national role conception refers to the more motivational approach and it is defined as 'the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems' (Holsti 1970: 12). Kirste and Maull defined it as 'an actor's perception of his or her position vis-à-vis others (the ego part of the role) and the perception of the role expectations of others (the alter part of the role) as signalled through language and action' (1996: 289 cited in Harnisch et al. 2011: 8). Subsequently, role expectations refer to 'those expectations that other actors (alter) prescribe and expect the role-beholder ego to enact' (Kirste and Maull 1996 cited in Aggestam 2004: 64). As pointed out by Aggestam, expectations refer both to the obligations stemming from international organisation membership, and also to what other international actors expect of the particular actors (2004a: 64). These expectations can both empower and limit the actor in its behaviour as they 'compromise[d] of the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations' (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 496). In the final model of role institutionalisation I distinguish between national role conceptions and role expectations. This enables me to analytically distinguish between expectations expressed towards the institution of the Presidency itself and towards the individual Member States in the Chair.

The subsequent stage of the actual behaviour of an actor is referred to as the role performance or role enactment (Sarbin and Allen 1968). The causal link between these concepts as presented by Holsti starts with the national role conception, which influences the role performance that is subsequently reflected in the actual behaviour of the actor, namely the state's behaviour on the international arena. As argued by Aggestam, 'this correlation between role conception and role performance may only be applicable to more general roles' (2004a: 65). With multiple roles held by countries 'role conceptions do not determine outcomes directly, but merely define the potential range of options and strategies' (Aggestam 2004a: 65). Thus, identifying and analysing the national role conception held by a country is only one analytical tool when studying countries' behaviour in foreign policy.

Role theory also emerges as a promising venue for analysing the ambiguity of institutional rules and norms. The ability of an actor to act according to its role conception de-

depends on how clearly the role is defined. The better the role is understood, the clearer the expected behaviour of that role is (Biddle and Thomas 1966). As distinguished by Barnett, the level of clarity according to which the role script provides actors with guidelines on how to behave can vary (1993 cited in Aggestam 2004a: 60). If the script sets detailed and well-defined guidelines it creates a role position and a clear role prescription (Ibid.). Some authors refer to role prescription as the expected behaviour of the state as set by international organisations (Breuning 1995: 237). Holsti defines role prescriptions as ‘cultures, societies, institutions or groups attached to particular positions’ (1970: 239). It is thus the influence of the external environment. Other introduced the concept of ‘inventory of role’, which refers to the activities or functions conceived as part of the role (Biddle and Thomas 1966) or the clusters or patterns of behaviours denoting both general and more specific types of roles (Turner 1988). Therefore, the concept of role prescription, defined as a set of normative and functionally oriented expectations defining expected behaviour, is used to identify the new post-Lisbon role of the Presidency.

With a clear role prescription, an actor’s performance - role taking - would limit the actor’s ability to focus on its own perception and interpretation of the role. On the contrary, in the case of role ambiguity (Bray and Brawley 2002), role preference would characterise roles which are defined in general terms, thus granting the actor greater freedom of self-definition and greater flexibility in role enactment. Role ambiguity is ‘associated with positions that require the performance of few specific duties and responsibilities’ (Searing 1991: 1249). The notion of role preference captures the complexity and ambiguity of the Presidency’s role in the aftermath of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. With the emphasis shifted towards the agency and its interpretation, the actor becomes involved in role making, creating the possibility for the actor to project its own role conception into the international system.

The interactionist perspective on role theory offers useful assumptions on role making by pointing to the ongoing creation of roles through constant social interaction (Turner 1962). Roles are the result of negotiations that involve an interaction between a person and the environment (McCall and Simmons 1978). Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1999) have argued that ‘[...] while the role playing presupposes the ability of people to take the role of the other, role making entails constructing, changing, adapting, and modifying a role in the course of a role performance’ (cited in Martin and Wil-

son 2005: 652). Harnisch et al. use Ernest Renan's concept of 'daily plebiscites' to explain the interactionist dimension of the role approach: 'foreign policy roles are constantly being reconstructed, hence recreated and thus often also subtly modified through the words and (inter)actions of many individuals – some more, some less influential in shaping social order' (2011: 2). Thus, role making can be conceptualised as a 'process of improvising, exploring, and judging what is appropriate on the basis of the situation and the response of others at the moment' (Peterson 1986: 23). The latter seems particularly capable of capturing the influence of the Member States in the chair of the Presidency in the process of developing the new role.

The structural changes in the European foreign policy system are at the core of this research, and so the notion of role change constitutes an important part of the analysis. Even though the concept of role assumes stability to some extent, since it refers to characteristic and repeated patterns of behaviour, role theory can still account for exploring change. In role scholarship, when change is discussed it is usually discussed with reference to the role conceptions held by countries (Folz 2011, Frank 2011, Maull 2011, Wolf 2011, Gottwald and Duggan 2011, Aggestam 2004a). As pointed out by Aggestam 'a role conflict exists when dominant role conceptions in the role-set are incompatible with one another' (Aggestam 2004a: 68). Therefore, the concept could also refer to changes at the organisational level, as in general role conflicts are more likely to occur 'when the conditions and context within which [roles] were originally formulate[d] change' (2004a: 68). Role conflict is more likely to occur when 'new roles are being added over time, as the institution develops and as the original context in which the initial roles were developed changes' (Juncos and Pomorska 2010: 7). Thus, one can distinguish between conflict within the role set, between various roles (inter-role conflict) and conflict within the role (intra-role conflict). The last of these seems particularly relevant to the issue of the dichotomous conceptualisation of the Presidency as a neutral broker and policy entrepreneur. Scripts for these two roles set contending expectations towards the actor's behaviour, resulting in an ongoing inter-role conflict. This occurs when an individual has to perform roles that require incompatible behaviour or when there are conflicting organisational expectations and demands (Schwab, Iwanicki and Pierson 1983). Few studies have focused on exploring role change (Flockhart 2011) and the formation of new roles (Sedelmeier 2006) in context of international organisations. These studies, which contain some insightful findings on the mechanisms behind role

change, provide a starting point for building a role-based model of role institutionalisation by introducing the concept of role institutionalisation. The next section introduces the understanding of role analysis as the operationalization of relationships between various role concepts.

3.3 Role Analysis

As argued before, different strands of role theory emphasise different causal links between role concepts and thus produce different models for role analysis. In her attempt to study the national foreign policy of EU Member States through a conceptualisation of ‘homo politicus: a situated actor’ Aggestam applied the theory of structuration to operationalise the relationship between various role concepts. In doing so, she followed the main structurationist argument ‘that social structure is unceasingly mediated through the agency, and thus exist only as it is expressed in human social activity’ (2004a: 59). Three perspectives were distinguished: institutional, interactional and intentional. Firstly, the institutional argument outlines roles ‘as a set of norms and expectations constrains behaviour’ (2004a: 59). This is further developed into the concept of role playing, emphasising various levels of consensus regarding the particular role and the thus importance of intersubjectivity. According to this conception, roles can both enable and constrain an actor’s particular behaviour. This refers to the interactional approach which ‘brings out agency and its capacity for defining its own roles’ (Aggestam 2004a: 60). Inspired by Mead’s symbolical interactionism, this approach focuses on the actual processes of social interaction as a way of changing and creating new roles (McCourt 2012). ‘Roles are sets of appropriate behaviour, not bundles of fixed duties; they emerge in interaction and give the actor a sense of its structure and the scope of possible action’ (McCourt 2012: 370). In order to gain a sense of what is expected, the actors ‘take the role of another’ in order to ‘view their state’s Self or identity from the perspective of others’ (McCourt 2012: 371). The third intentional perspective was to capture the agency’s knowledgeability and rationality in a bounded sense of the actors’ influence on defining their own role. Such an approach was ‘crucial in relating reasons to structure and allowing for flexibility and judgement in playing of the role’ (Aggestam 2004a: 620). The original framework, which was built to explore perceptions of European foreign policy at the national level, focused on exploring the influence of EU membership by analysing the extent to which national role conceptions reflect ‘the socialisation process taking place between national foreign-makers in the EU’ (Aggestam 2004a: 10). This

was further developed into a model presented in Elgström and Smith's edited volume on 'The European Union's Roles in International Politics' (2006). The model as presented in Figure 3 demonstrates how various role concepts interact with each other. Thus, the role prescription is operationalised as formal and informal normative and functionally oriented expectations defining the expected behaviour of the Member State while in the chair of the Presidency. Elgström used role theory to present the Presidency as 'a structurally situated position' (2006: 173). Over the years, the institution of the Presidency has become associated with formal functional provisions as well as more informal norms of conduct.

Using the concept of role taking, Elgström emphasised the interactional perspective of the Member State's behaviour: 'purposive roles are the result of dynamic interactions between institutional constraints and actor's preferences' (Elgström 2006: 173). Therefore, as a result of learning and socialisation, actors may try to follow expectations associated with this position (Ibid.). However, they might interpret these expectations as constraints 'which they have to take into account but that they want to interpret, stretch or circumvent, according to their own definition of the situation at hand' (Elgström 2006: 174). Moreover, as actors face external expectations, they also face 'expectations that are linked to internally derived roles, which stem from national self-images, tradition and culture' (Elgström 2006: 184). If these expectations, external and internal, are contradictory, actors have to balance them. This also refers to the existence of contradictory expectations towards one role; the latter enables conceptualisation of the Presidency through the concept of intra-conflict caused by 'the potential conflict between the demands of the Presidency norms and the expectations that arise from its role as a defender and promoter of national interests' (Ibid.). As noted by Elgström, the norm of effectiveness, associated with the expectation of the Presidency to move the work of the CEU forward, and the norm of rotation, creates 'a tendency that other Member States permit the present incumbent to pursue certain prioritized issues' (2006: 185). This offers an additional explanation for the influence capacity of the Presidency and its agenda shaping powers. Finally, Member States bring to the office a number of their national role conceptions which define their strategic actions in foreign policy (Elgström 2006: 186). Consequently, the role approach results in a more complex outlook on the Presidency in which 'existing structurally based expectations of the Presidency's role (that is, expectations of neutrality and impartiality, of effectiveness and of consensus-seeking)

interact with the particular role conceptions that are brought to the office by individual Member States to produce both common features and variety in Presidency role performance' (Elgström 2006: 172).

In order to study the variations in the Presidency's performance, Natalia Leal, in her PhD thesis, adjusted Aggestam's model as presented in Figure 3 to capture role analysis associated with the Presidency. The particular relevance of Leal's study for this research is that her project focuses on the European level of foreign policy making, and in particular, foreign policy making during the CEU chairmanship. The latter makes Leal's work particularly relevant in conceptualising the Presidency's performance through presenting it as a model of causal links between role concepts. As presented in Figure 4, Leal included an additional stage in her role analysis: role assessment was included to further emphasise the dynamism within the process of Presidency's performance and the extent to which these concepts are mutually constitutive (Leal 2010: 175). The observation that the role conception is affected by both self-image and the others' expectations leads to the question of how much interplay there is between them (Elgström and Smith 2006: 6). Leal decided to explore this question and relate it to the level of role expectations understood as 'the manifestations of our own conceptions (what we show others we believe to be our role) will influence other's expectations of us' (2010: 176). This constant recreation of both role conceptions and role expectations is caught in the framework of social learning. Consequently, as Leal argues, 'an evaluation of each Presidency's overall role (particularly of their role-playing and role performance) can be a vital element feeding back, through a process of social learning, to both actor and structural level: perceptions of the success of (previous) interactions and outcome, inform not only the ongoing and future role of any individual Member State while holding the Presidency but also following Presidency (different Member-State) roles' (2010: 175).

Both processes of learning and socialisation emerge as important explanatory factors of the behaviour of the Member States in the chair of the Presidency. Two issues emerge as particularly relevant for this thesis: firstly, including the final stage of role allows for an analysis of the relationship between particular practices as introduced by the individual Member States and the process of institutionalisation of these practices into a new post-Lisbon role; secondly, learning and socialisation might emerge as potential mechanisms for the performance of individual Member States.

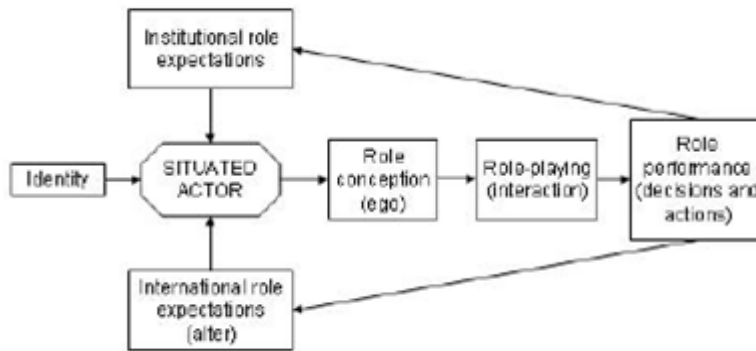


Figure 3. Role Analysis by Aggestam (2004a)

Figure 10. Key role concepts and their interaction

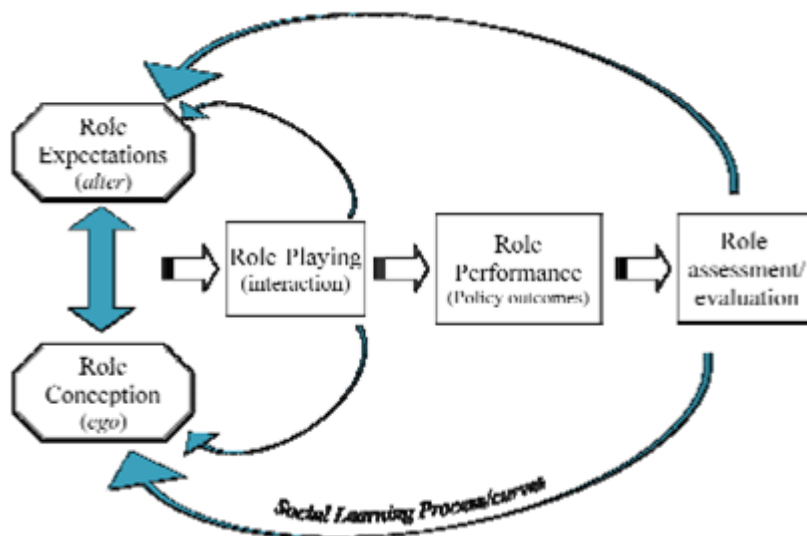


Figure 4. Role Analysis by Leal (2010)

Introducing the concept of role change into Aggestam's model enabled an investigation into continuity and change within foreign policy at the national level. Pointing to the multiple sources of roles and their particular sensitivity to institutional and time context would allow for exploration of potential reasons for role conflict both at the internal, national level and external, European levels of analysis. The change in the latter could trigger role conflict, as the previous patterns of behaviour might not be relevant for the new context, but also in the case of unexpected behaviour by other actors (Aggestam 2004a: 68). As noted by Aggestam, critical junctures would be periods particularly

prone to role conflict, which might in turn trigger role change (2004a: 68). Inconsistency between national role conception and role expectations, as well as the existence of different role expectations, might point to the instability of the role and thus its potential role conflict (Aggestam 2004a: 69). Finally, role conflict would be possible in role sets including two or more contradictory role conceptions (Ibid.). However, as noted by Aggestam, there are examples of countries pursuing contradictory role conceptions for years. For example, French role conceptions of distinctiveness emphasised the country's national independence, while on the other hand it firmly supported European integration (2004a). This thus prompts the question of when the role conflict would result in a role change. This is where role theory echoes the generally limited specificity of roles, as earlier argued by recent historical institutionalists, and points to certain discretion in interpreting roles (Aggestam 2004a: 70). Limited knowledge and expectations about the particular role trigger the actor into a more subjective role enactment. 'Innovations take place when an actor faces external situations for which s/he has not been programmed' (Ibid.). As pointed out by Stryker, more salient rules make the actor more reluctant to ignore role expectations (2006: 228). This might be a result of the previous socialisation and learning. Therefore, role ambiguity facilitates creative interpretation, which seems to be a feature of the post-Lisbon context.

To sum up, this thesis continues with the recently established practice of applying role theory to study contemporary foreign policy making. The reviewed literature on role analysis offers insightful assumptions into the processes and mechanisms behind role making and institutional change; however it does not offer a comprehensive theoretical approach to the core of this research. Since the particular focus of this study is institutional change, I argue that a distinctive framework combining the insights of role theory and new institutionalism might be more useful to tackle the research puzzle of the post-Lisbon role of the Presidency in European foreign policy making.

3.4 Operationalisation of the Role-Based Model of Role Institutionalisation

One of the main issues facing the current scholarship on the institutional change is how to capture the interplay between agential and structural levels of analysis. 'Roles can bridge the different levels of analysis, from the individual to the state to the international system' (Thies 2013: 29). Roles thus offer a way to bridge the theoretical gap between structure and agency and might offer a new way of conceptualising institutional change. Additionally, as highlighted by Elgström and Smith, role theory emphasises the

dynamic interaction between the actors' self-conceptions and structurally guided role expectations (2006). This promotes a view of the process of institutionalisation as interplay between actors' individual interpretations of what they perceive to be their role and the influence of the emerging new system's functional demands placed on these actors. I conceptualise the latter as institutional feedback and the former as role making. The institutional change refers to all of the actors involved in the system. Thus, when an actor is not capable of performing a new role, other actors will have to address the emerging functional requirements. This structural feedback from the emerging post-Lisbon system with the functional demands created by the lack and/or the ineffective performance of other actors is defined as the institutional feedback. The proposed model of role institutionalisation provides an additional analytical step between exogenous institutional change, the implementation of formal rules, their interpretation and a new pattern of behaviour associated with a new role.²⁰ As Le Prestre has remarked, defining a role needs to be combined with the role being accepted by other actors (1997: 5). The mechanisms behind this model – role making and institutional feedback – are relational, and the changing role is a result of the interactions among all of the actors involved in the system. Thus, at the micro-level of analysis, the focus is on the Member States in the chair of the first post-Lisbon Presidencies and their interpretation of what the new role should entail; this is conceptualised as role preference. At the meso-level, the interactions between the Member State and the emerging system are captured by the concept of role making, examining the emerging functions, new patterns of behaviour of the involved actors through rule interpretation, implementation and rulemaking. It also involves the stage of clarifying interpretations and adaptation among various actors involved in the emerging new system and how they negotiate performing new roles introduced by the change of formal provisions. At the macro-level the changing role of the Presidency at the structural level and its ongoing institutionalisation is conceptualised as role institutionalisation. All of these levels are connected and this contiguous relationship between them is reflected in the proposed model.

As I argued earlier, the Lisbon Treaty introduced what can be referred to as role ambiguity with reference to the Presidency's role in European foreign policy. Without a clear role prescription, resulting in the lack of clearly prescribed normative and functional

²⁰ The concept of role institutionalization was originally introduced by Elgström and Smith in the Introduction to the 'The European Union's Roles in International Politics (2006a)', however it was not clearly defined.

behaviour, both the Member State in the chair and other actors did not face clear expectations of what this position should be in the post-Lisbon context. Moreover, even in the pre-Lisbon context the Presidency's role in general, but in particular in the area of European foreign policy, was characterised by a low level of role specificity. The variety of functions that the Presidency was supposed to fulfil was best demonstrated by Schout's 'juggling three balls' metaphor. Moreover, big Member States were usually much more active during their time in office (Bunse 2009). The previous research demonstrating variations between various Presidencies and between various policy areas further demonstrates how the Member State in the Presidency has been subject to differentiated expectations (Leal 2010). Aggestam argued that a 'certain amount of discretion in interpreting roles appears indispensable to accommodate potentially conflicting roles that different contexts generate' (2004a: 70). This seems to be particularly visible in the example of the Presidency: being subject to a complex range of different expectations has allowed for certain flexibility in behaving while in the chair. The ongoing intra-conflict, as well as 'the conception-performance gap' characterising the EU's performance on the word stage (Elgström and Smith 2006a: 248) triggered the formal role change of the Presidency in an attempt to ensure a more efficient design and a clearer role prescription. Nevertheless, as a result of the LT, this role ambiguity was further reinforced as the formal provisions would have to be adapted in practice. Consequently, the first Member States in the chair of the Presidency were put in charge of the Treaty's implementation and had to interpret formal provisions and adapt the role to the emerging system of European foreign policy making. Therefore, the analytical framework starts with the concept of incomplete contracting to highlight the ambiguity of formal provisions referring to the Presidency's role and its further development. I argue that since the provisions failed to introduce a clear scenario for the Presidency's functions and inter-institutional position, these first Member States had to interpret the role or even 'produced the role' in the process of role making (figure 5).

As noted by Elgström and Smith 'role taking is by no means a mechanical process' (2006: 5). Aggestam (2004a) further stressed the interactive negotiation processes where actors confront their national conceptions with expectations. As scholarship on the interactionist role perspective argues, role enactment might be better portrayed as role making, namely the ongoing creation of a role by various actors through constant social interactions (Turner 1962). As noted by Turner, actors develop their individual

fine-tuned conceptions of rules. This is the result both of interactions with other actors, and previous experience and learning. In his model of role analysis, an actor's self-conception is a critical causal force in role making; 'even when the macrostructure dictates the formal position of a person, an individual's self will dictate the more fine-tuned role that is asserted' (Turner 1988: 88-89). This is even more relevant when the structural roles are ambiguous and in the process of being developed. Incorporating both insights on policy and institutional entrepreneurship, this concept thus aims to frame the Presidency as an actor which seeks to influence the period of institutional adaptation according to its national interpretation with reference to the emerging institutional system while at the same time aiming to behave according to the informal expectations expressed by other actors towards this role and more broadly towards the new system of European foreign policy. The process of role making is thus used to explain the process of institutional entrepreneurship in the context of the absence of clear formal provisions referring to the Presidency's role. This ambiguous context provides a particular window of opportunity for the Member State in the chair to assume tasks and focus on policy areas which are not clearly regulated by the formal provisions. Such opportunism is further enabled by the particular structural context, namely the particular nature of the post-Lisbon European foreign policy. As I noted in Chapter 2, the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty prompted the emergence of an even more complex system of European foreign policy making, with some areas being under the supranationalist management of permanent Presidency of the HRVP and some under the intergovernmental management exercised by the CEU Presidency. This has further reinforced the hybrid nature of the Presidency which now comprises both intergovernmental and supranational components of the post-Lisbon Presidency in European foreign policy making.

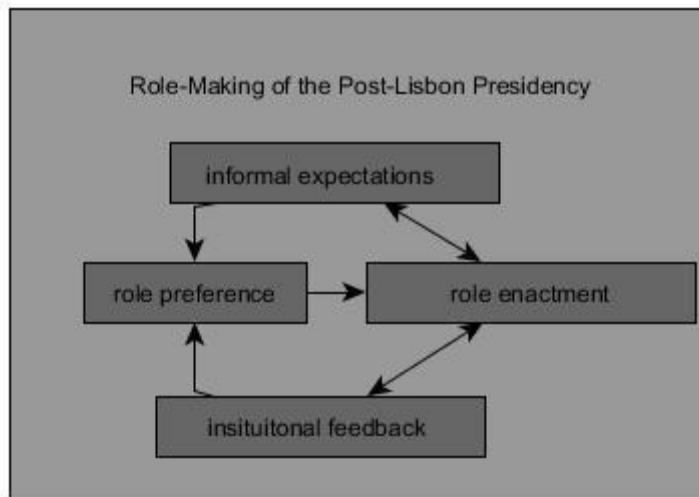


Figure 5. Role Making of the Post-Lisbon Presidency

The concept of role preference is used in the model to emphasise the latter assumption of role ambiguity with reference to the post-Lisbon Presidency's institutional position within the emerging system. The analysis of the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty demonstrated the lack of a clear role prescription towards the role of the post-Lisbon Presidency in European foreign policy making. It thus created role ambiguity which had to be clarified by the actors taking up this role. This is framed as role making. It explores the behaviour of individual Member States in the chair and traces their capacity to shape the new role. With no previous examples to focus on, the first Member States in the chair would have to build their role preferences based on their interpretation of the limited formal provisions and informal expectations held by other actors involved in the system. The identification of role preference is developed through content analysis of documents on the individual Presidencies' strategies, their official programmes as well as interviews with relevant national officials.

Individual role making takes place in the context of the constitutive institutional feedback which refers to both formal expectations, as introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, and structural expectations emerging in due course of the subsequent implementation. The latter depends on the performance of other actors involved in the system; if they are unable to fully perform all of the tasks associated with their role positions, other actors might use this opportunity to take up some of these functions and consequently expand the original scripts of their roles. Formation of individual roles emerges thus in the constitutive process of inter-institutional adaptation. Finally, each of the actors can be both

empowered and constrained by informal expectations held towards their individual behaviour. As argued earlier, the hybrid nature of the pre-Lisbon Presidency resulted in the chair holder facing both expectations referring to the institution itself as well as more individual expectations expressed towards the particular chair holder. Interviews with officials working in the capitals and in Brussels are the main source of exploring these informal expectations, as these are not institutionalised and formalised in any of the official documents.

The previous analytical assumptions on the role conflict and role change constitute the focus of this framework. Harnisch's research on role change further incorporates elements of learning into the interactionist approach of role theory. The interactive process of 'role making' is characterised by 'the attitudes and actions a role beholder takes on when performing one role or reconciling several conflicting roles' (Harnisch 2012: 49). Harnisch distinguished four main sources enabling role making and thus triggering learning. Firstly, the ambiguity of expectations surrounding in particular the newly emerging roles; secondly, the lack of proper expertise of the role beholder; thirdly, conflicting formal and informal role expectations; and finally the 'so-called person-role conflict' which refers to the contradiction between role conception and role expectation (2011: 50). All of these might refer to the post-Lisbon Presidency as well as to individual Member States in the chair. Highlighting the process of role making within this role analysis focuses the analysis on the actor's activities in creative interpretation and formation of the role. What is even more interesting, Harnisch highlights structural effects of role making as possible reconstruction of other actors' roles in response to this new and unexpected behaviour. Consequently, the whole role set is reconstructed to accommodate changes within an individual role. This seems to be emerging as the key interaction for capturing the process of institutional change, framed as 'the conscious manipulation of one's own role taking behaviour to (re)shape the role of another actor, presumably a counter or commensurate role' (Harnisch 2011: 10).

The next stage of the analysis is that of role enactment, exploring the actual performance of the Member State during its six-month period in the office by examining their daily practices, particular functions and tasks. As argued before, role conflict is more likely during periods of institutional change. In his work, Biddle identified three potential behaviours that are prompted by role conflict: firstly choice or compromise between contending norms, secondly abandonment of the role performance, and thirdly nega-

tions which lead to both the change of the actor's behaviour as well as the change of the expectations regarding this role (1986: 83-4). This might shed some light on the possible behaviour of the Member State in the chair while facing role conflict. The stage of the analysis is based to a large extent on the pre-Lisbon Presidency's functions, but it also aims to incorporate a more intuitive approach, enabling identification of newly emerging functions. The focus of this analysis is placed on the emerging norms, rules and practices, both formal and informal, which are associated with the new role of the Presidency.

Grossman noted that 'role theory may prove to be a useful tool in forecasting changes in state behaviour' (2005 cited in Breuning 2011: 30). Most of the role-based research focuses on the constitutive and regulative impact of international organisations on states and conceptualising the change at the level of national role conceptions and role behaviour. In order to better capture the focus of this research and differentiate between role change at the level of agency and the level of structure, I introduce the concept of role institutionalisation. I argue that this concept is more capable of exploring the process of the Presidency's role change as a result of formal expectations expressed towards the institution itself, informal expectations expressed towards the individual Member States, the emerging institutional feedback and the purposive behaviour of the Member State in this role.

In the case of this research, role institutionalisation is triggered by top-down forces of institutional change brought by the adoption of the LT. The concept of role ambiguity is introduced to highlight the lack of a clear role prescription for the Presidency in EU foreign affairs. Given the incomplete nature of the LT's provisions the implementing agents are tasked with interpretation and adaptation of the new provisions to ensure functioning of the new system. How agents understand these provisions is affected firstly by their national role conceptions and how they interpret their role on international and European stage, and secondly by the institutional context in which they operate. This interplay between implementing agents and functional demands of the emerging system can provide a comprehensive understanding of the institutional change of the Presidency. As pointed out by Poret and Rittelmeyer 'in the EU institutionalisation means more rules, more formality, more stability, more ritualization, and developing roles that are able to shape attitudes' (2014: 4). Therefore, the comparison between the first four Presidencies, the individual expectations they face and day-to-day working

arrangements they implement, allows us to identify development of stable practices and patterns of behaviour. The authors also noted that ‘institutionalisation should not be understood as a linear, automatic and imposed path but rather as the conjunction of multiple and multidimensional processes, progressing at unequal speeds and interacting together’ (Ibid.). Thus, the model of role institutionalisation captures the dynamic and ongoing process of interpretation, adaptation and consolidation of shared expectations and scripts associated with the newly introduced roles. Consequently, informal and formal norms, rules and codes of conducts become formalised into a new role prescription.

The main aim of this section is to adopt the previous application of role analysis into studying institutional change. Consolidation of insights from the institutional analysis and role theory should allow for the building of a framework capable of capturing the emergence of the Presidency’s new role as a result of the role ambiguity created by implementation of formal provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. The model below offers a simplified overview of interactions between role concepts in the process of role institutionalisation (Figure 6). The model, to a large extent, reflects most of the analytical assumptions stemming from role-based research in IR and FPA. Nevertheless, the focus of the analysis is shifted from foreign policy making to institutional change. The previously built model of role making, as the conceptualisation of a constitutive process of individual interaction between the structure (institutional feedback) and agency (role enactment), is thus framed into a model of role institutionalisation capturing the longer term perspective at the macro level. Therefore, the role assessment and role prescription are introduced to capture the individual effect of particular role making on the institutionalisation of the new role in the ongoing process of institutionalisation.

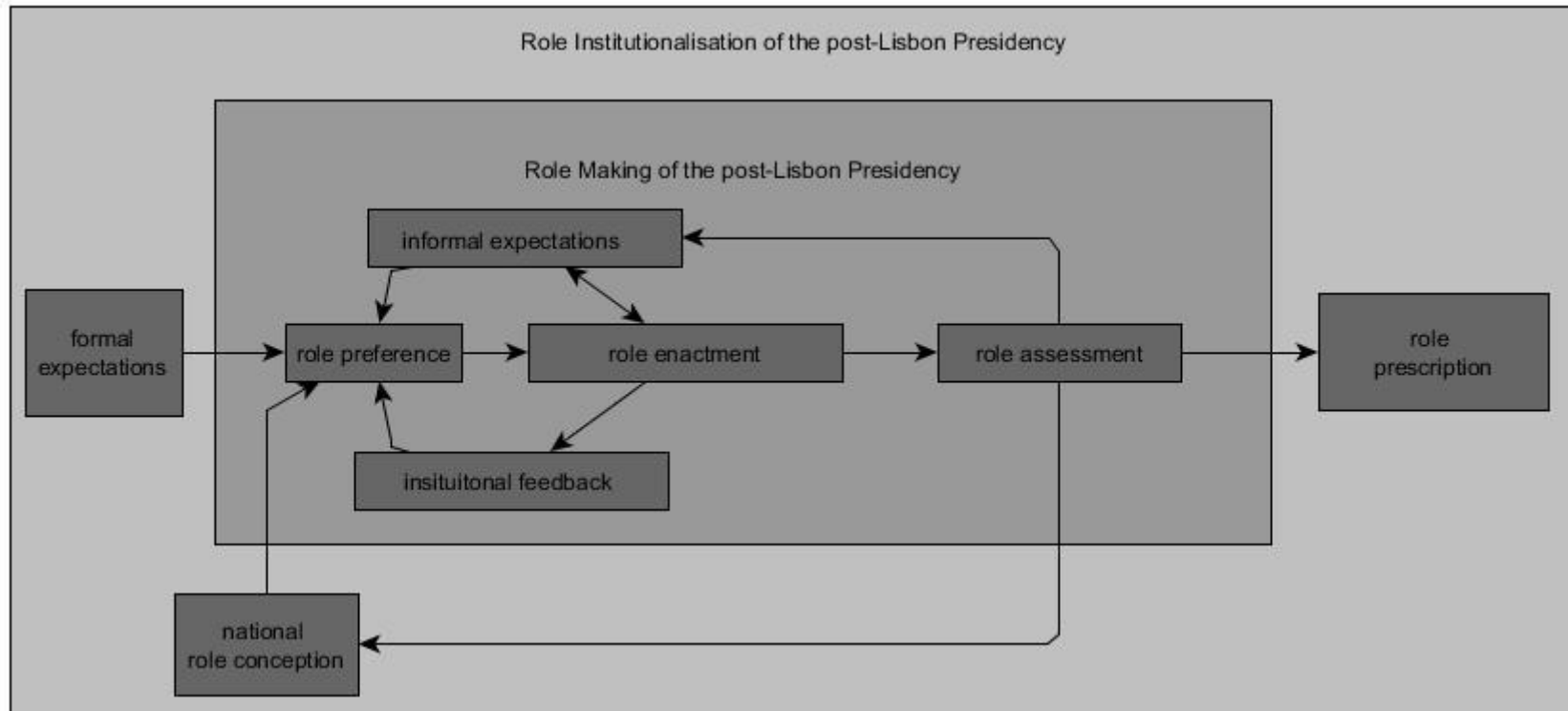


Figure 6. Role Institutionalisation of the Post-Lisbon Presidency

3.5 Research Design

In order to examine the development of the post-Lisbon Presidency's roles, I apply a small-N structured comparison based on four case studies of the first post-Lisbon Presidencies. I use the interpretative version of process tracing as an analytical tool to open the 'black box' of institutional change from the implementation of the LT's provisions, through the informal adaptation of these formal provisions to every day practices to the institutionalisation of the new role and the Presidency's inter-institutional position. Process tracing has become increasingly popular in political science, due to its focuses on 'processes, causal mechanism and the constitutive interplay between structure and agency (Bennet and Checkel 2011: 1). It enables one to trace the interaction between variables and then leads to the studied outcome (Checkel 2008: 115). George and McKeown defined process-tracing as a method of within-case analysis to evaluate the 'decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes' (1985:35). George and McKeown further explain that process-tracing 'attempts to uncover what stimuli actors attend to; the decision process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decisions; the actual behaviour that then occur; the effect of various institutional arrangements on attention, processing, and behaviour; and the effect of other variables of interest on attention, processing, and behaviour' (1985: 35). This thesis will start with discussing the ambiguities around the role of the post-Lisbon Presidency, and will then trace its institutionalisation into a new pattern of behaviour associated with the institution.

Process tracing allows to combine positivist and interpretivist approaches allowing to explore 'both the causal *what* and the causal *how*' (Venesson 2008: 232). In the interpretative version of process tracing, the focus shifts towards understanding the meaning behind the actors' behaviour and their practices, and towards exploring the meaning of these in the process of institutionalisation. This version of process tracing 'becomes narration in search of patterns' (Gysen et al. 2006). Ruback notes that 'process tracing is narration – storytelling in the service of relating a causal logic' (2010: 478).²¹ It will thus be possible to trace relations between beliefs, perceptions and behaviour (Jervis 2006). Process tracing is used to reconstruct and compare the foreign policy making processes during individual Presidencies in order to examine how each country inter-

²¹ For details on how to construct a process tracing narrative in a methodologically sound manner see Ruback 2010.

prets its role while in the chair of the Presidency, and how they subsequently implement this role in practice. I argue that in this manner it is possible to explore how various national role conceptions affect these interpretations (role preference) and the subsequent performances of the chosen Member States (role making). Role making focuses on every day practices that take place in the post-Lisbon foreign policy making. The comparison between the first four Presidencies makes it possible to trace the development of the role at the structural level in terms of its ongoing institutionalisation and regarding the consequences of the differences in the conceptualising and the implementation of the Presidency's roles by individual Member States. This analysis, therefore, traces the process of interpretation, conceptualisation, implementation and adaptation of the formal provisions of the LT to the working arrangements in the post-Lisbon system of foreign policy making.

The first part of this project focuses on understanding and explaining the individual interpretations held by the Member States with reference to their roles in the chair of the Presidency. This focus would encompass the States' particular interpretations of their institutional positions, and will highlight the importance of beliefs and intentional meanings. This is why the study expresses preference towards the interpretative epistemology and qualitative methodology. As argued by McCourt, 'role-playing is inherently interpretative' (2012: 3); interpretative methodology emerges as key to interpreting 'the scope of appropriate of behaviour' (2012: 3). The rationale behind this choice is that a qualitative approach 'is capable of saying a good deal more about the institution and countries chosen and shows a greater contextual detail than quantitative methods can exhibit' (Bunse 2009: 10). Furthermore, following the interpretative approach, the project seeks to 'understand a phenomenon through accessing the meaning participants assign to them' (Orlikowski and Baroud 1991: 5), at the same time to 'emphasis[e] not only the importance of subjective meanings for the individual actor but also the social structures which condition and enable such meaning and are constituted by them' (Walsham 1993: 246). The interpretative approach is based on the assumption that 'we cannot understand political phenomena unless we grasp the relevant meaning' (Bevir and Rhodes 2015: 4). Therefore, 'we can only explain actions and practices properly only if we appeal to the reasons that inform them' (Bevir and Rhodes 2015: 5). Interpretivists claim that meanings are constitutive of actions: 'political scientists can discuss actions and institutions properly only by evoking the intentionality of the actors. People act on

their beliefs, so social scientists can explain people's actions only by appealing to their beliefs (....) To grasp the reasons for which someone acted is not just to understand their action but also to give a proper explanation of their action' (Bevir and Rhodes 2015: 3).

Furthermore, an interpretative approach to institutionalism allows for opening the concept of an institution to incorporate meanings (Hay 2016). Institutions as products of actions are informed by the varied and contingent beliefs and desires of the relevant people (Bevir and Rhodes 2015: 7). An interpretivist epistemology focuses on 'attempting to make sense of or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3). In the case of this project, this phenomenon is the process of institutional change and in particular, the question of how the new Presidency's role forms as a result of the Member States' individual interpretation and their subsequent behaviour. As argued by Soulsby and Clark, studying institutional change as a process 'enables researchers to understand better social actors' own experiences of change and the ways in which they have made sense of and given sense to organisational processes' (2007: 1432). Thus, this study is also aimed at understanding the phenomenon of organisational change through examining the ways actors made sense of their context and organisational change. The interpretive framework for data analysis is summarised by the argument that organisational change during institutional change is accompanied by the presence of multiple interpretations, which in turn provide opportunities to influence the shape of the new role. Such an approach makes it possible to map different meanings with reference to Member States' foreign policy roles, European policy roles, interests, and the role of the Member State within the EU foreign policy within the particular context of EU normative framework. Consequently, the interpretative approach is compatible both with the role-based and the institutional approach.

Moreover, as this study seeks to identify what the new role of the Presidency is, it explores the six-month period of the CEU chairmanship in order to identify emerging patterns of behaviour, such as new role conceptions, expectations, informal practices and norms, and other factors which shapes the subsequent stage of the role institutionalisation of the Presidency. As argued by Aggestam, 'a vital insight into the way structural changes impact on foreign policy can be obtained from understanding how political agents perceive these conditions, rather than assuming deterministic adaptation' (2004: 3). The interpretative approach is particularly significant, as in order to answer the ques-

tion of how the new role is being formed, it is necessary to look at the meaning that all of the actors involved in the process held towards the role of the Presidency, namely their expectations. The approach thus completes role theory in an attempt to look at the relationship and more specifically, mutual interaction between the agency and the structure.

3.5.1 Analysis of Data

At the first level of analysis, the focus is to identify the role preference; how the Member States interpret their role while in the chair of the Presidency. As Wehner and Thies noted, Walker pointed out that role theory, even though it possesses a conceptually rich toolbox, it is still characterised as methodologically poor (2015: 413). There are ‘no systematic ways of studying roles’ and ‘no models for developing a coherent method of evidence collection’ (Ibid., Thies 2014: 8). The interpretive approach does not have its own specific toolkit for producing data, but it is usually associated with ethnography (observation and interviewing), textual analysis, historical methods and narratives and storytelling (Bevir and Rhodes 2015: 24). For this project, a narrative interpretative process-tracing based on a comparative case study emerges as the most appropriate approach to identify role preferences, to examine their enactment during the six-month period of the Presidency and finally to trace influences among individual Presidencies towards developing the new role.

The process-oriented model of role institutionalisation integrated three levels of analysis: action, interaction and institutionalisation. The micro-level aims to focus on the formation of role preference by the Member States and their strategic actions towards shaping the emerging post-Lisbon system of European foreign policy. Through the qualitative content analysis, I identify self-conceptions by coding the assertions that refer to the conceptions and to decision makers’ hold of the ‘duties and responsibilities’ (Le Prestre 1997: 12). As noted before, at this level I focus on identifying role preferences through examining national role conceptions with reference to Member States’ foreign and European policies. These are rooted in the states’ understanding of themselves, and in their conception of what they represent in the world (1997: 2). Research interviews, primary documents and secondary sources serve as primary material to inductively identify role preference and role expectations. This data was themed according to how the individual Member States saw their roles in the European and the international stage, as well as while in the chair of the Presidency. The expectations were

organised according to more general functional expectations held towards the institution of the Presidency itself and more individual expectations held towards the particular Member States in the chair. By comparing these expectations, I will evaluate if the hybrid nature of the Presidency continued in the post-Lisbon context.

The meso-level focuses on daily practices and interactions between the Member States in the chair of the Presidency, and on the other actors involved in the European foreign policy making. The dynamic relationship between role making and institutional feedback is particularly relevant at this level in order to capture individual interaction during each of the Presidencies. This will be done by reviewing the relationship between role preference and role enactment in order to distinguish between the ideal type of the role and the actual behaviour. The data collected through document reviewing and interviews will serve as evidence for policy and decision-making processes and for unfolding interactions taking place during the individual Presidencies by tracing the policy making process from the Presidency's programme, through the EU's agenda during the six-month Presidency and by analysing the content of WGs' agenda focusing on the EU foreign policy making. The tracing of temporary sequences of events taking place during the individual Presidencies and identifying the dynamics between the EU institutions and other actors taking part in the EU system has allowed us to identify the functional scope and inter-institutional position of Presidency within the new post-Lisbon system.

The macro-level traces the development of the changing role of the Presidency across the individual Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies, in order to capture the process of the ongoing institutionalisation. Assessing how other actors perceive the motives behind the individual role preferences and their subsequent behaviour while in the chair of the Presidency makes it possible to identify a new pattern of appropriate behaviour associated with the post-Lisbon Presidency. These assessments are mostly extracted from documents and speeches produced by the EU and international officials and experts. They are analysed by extracting interpretations on individual Presidencies' performance and their impact on the emerging post-Lisbon system. It is important to highlight that all of these levels come into existence with each other through continuous relationships as presented in the model.

In its positivist version, process-tracing allows shifting from correlation to causation by taking ‘the causal mechanism inherent in hypotheses seriously and analysing in detail whether a particular pathway, triggered by an independent variable, was indeed causing a particular event’ (Panke 2012: 136). As argued by Beach and Pedersen, by applying a process-tracing approach the focus should be on identifying causal mechanisms ‘in order to open the black box of causality as much as possible’ (Bunge 1997, cited in Beach & Pedersen 2013: 39). This means opening up the ‘black box’ of the institutional change. George and Bennett define causal mechanisms as ‘ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities’ (2005: 137). Yet, it is necessary to adjust this approach, and to shift towards a more interpretivist one. As highlighted by Guzzini, interpretivist process tracing starts with ‘the understanding of international events, not with the events themselves’ (2013: 4). In the case of this research, the national interpretation of the change brought by the Lisbon Treaty as developed by the individual Member States. Thus, process-tracing becomes narration in search of patterns (Gysen et al. 2006), as narratives offer ‘a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way’ (Hinchman and Hinchamn 1997: xvi).

Since this research project aims to capture the changing role of the Presidency, the first four Presidencies are analysed and compared in order to identify any emerging patterns of behaviour and functions that are shared among the subsequent Member States in the chair. Therefore, the main research method is a comparative case study approach. The choice of the subsequently held Presidencies was aimed to address the potential problem of biased selection. However due to the timing factor, as this research project’s empirical phase started in December 2010, the primary method in case of the first two Presidencies were the qualitative content analysis of the secondary sources complemented by a limited number of research interviews. In the case of the two latter Presidencies, the primary data was collected through interviewing of the national, European and international officials involved in the Presidency’s management and the EU policy making system during the year of 2011. The available primary and secondary sources served as a cross-checking material to provide a greater validity of the findings. Thus, there is a difference between the data collection for the first two and the subsequent two Presidencies. Yet, in order to trace the Presidency’s role institutionalisation it was nec-

essary to include the first two Presidencies which took place in 2010. The choice of Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland has additional research benefits. Following the EU's adopted pattern for the rotating Presidency, this selection covers big and small, old and new, and in geographical terms diversely located Member States. Such an approach will potentially allow this project to account for various intervening variables such as the size of the country, its traditional interests, previous experience of Presidency holding and the level of socialisation. As argued above, since the focus of this research is the period of the implementation of formal provisions, the case studies available for research are limited. By focusing on the period of the aftermath of the institutional change, this project aims to undertake an in-depth analysis of the behaviour of individual Member States, yet will still be capable of identifying more general pattern of the Presidency's role in European foreign policy making. By mapping the functions developed by each of the Member States such as Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland, it will be possible to identify which of the functions were identified across all of these Member States and if and which functions were introduced by individual Presidencies. Analysing the period of the chairmanship for the individual Member States will make it possible to identify the institutional capacity and the position of the Presidency at a given time. The subsequent comparison across four Presidencies will result in assessing what the influence of individual Member States, was namely on the emerging role of the Presidency in the area of European foreign policy making.

3.5.2 Research Material and Data Collection

Process-tracing is based on the gathered diagnostic evidence within the process under study, and usually comprises a temporal sequence of events. This is done in this project by looking for the observable implications of the proposed model and by analysing if the observed evidence is in line with the specified explanations (Bennett 2010: 208). As required by the method of process-tracing, I collected extensive evidence in the form of primary and secondary data. The thesis mostly uses secondary sources for the purpose of presenting the contemporary research on the subject of the Presidency and with reference to the employed theoretical approaches. Further research has been conducted on the role of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon context and as well as with the reference to the individual presidencies of Spain, Belgian, Hungary and Poland. As pointed out earlier the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies were primarily analysed through the analysis of academic and policy-oriented research while in the case of the Polish and Hungarian

Presidencies these were the secondary sources of data collection complementing the extensive expert interviewing. These pieces of research will be used as both guiding and cross-checking material.

Primary sources include a selection of governmental publications and documents at national and European levels.²² Their selection was guided by reviewing documentation of institutions at the national, European and international level potentially involved in management of the Presidency and EU foreign policy making. Any documents referring to the Presidency's role conception, to the actual Presidency's performance while in the chair, to the Presidency's assessments and describing accounts of EU foreign policy making during the 2-year old period (2010-2011) were included in the preliminary analysis. This was mostly a result of the extensive literature review undertaken at the initial stage of the research. Some of the institutions and particular documents were pointed out by interviewees. At the domestic level, the analysis of relevant documents includes, in particular, documents from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and other relevant offices, REPER, and the office of the PM. At the EU level, the focus will be on the EU Council, its WGs and committees (particularly the FAC, other working groups and bodies relating to foreign affairs, COREPER II), and other European institutions taking part in foreign policy making, particularly the HRVP, POTEK, SGC, and the emerging EEAS. In general, where it was possible, the preference was expressed towards the English version of the documents; otherwise, the translation was conducted by the researcher with particular reference to the relevant parts of the documents and interviews. The qualitative analysis of data was guided by themes identified in the model of role institutionalisation.

²² At the national level the selection of documents included: the discussion papers on the Presidency's priorities and reports following consultation with relevant stakeholders published by the Member States' governments and its relevant ministries and agencies; the policy papers referring to the Presidency's priorities and its role; the transcripts of Parliamentary debates; the drafts and official Presidencies' programmes; the Presidency's statements and final concluding reports; the press releases and speeches issued mostly by the office of the Prime Minister and the MFA, and other relevant officials. At the European level, the selection included the transcripts of the WGs taking place during the European Convention; the reports issued or commissioned by the Secretariat General of the CEU; the CEU's decision and regulation implementing the provisions of the LT; other documents produced by the Secretariat General of the CEU such as the Presidency's handbooks, Rules of Procedure. Moreover, the analysis included the European institutions by analysing European Council's conclusions; the debate transcripts taking place in the European Parliament; press releases, statements and speeches referring to the LT's provisions, the Presidency role in foreign affairs and the post-Lisbon foreign policy making system issued by the officials of the European Commission, the EEAS, the European Parliament, the office of the HRVP and officials from other relevant European agencies. The final analysis focused on the secondary sources such as academic papers, journal articles and policy papers published by think tanks and research institutes on the Presidency's role in particular with reference to foreign affairs.

Due to the specific nature of foreign policy, the access to these documents is heavily limited. As noted by Bunse ‘CEU meetings are held behind closed doors and the details of Presidency confessionals are not recorded’ (2009: 15). In order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the subject, a complementary research method is introduced: elite and expert interviewing. Extensive data was obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with the civil staff and officials involved in the Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies both at the level of staff working in Brussels at REPERs and at the level of national capitals in MFAs, as well as with officials working at European institutions: the EEAS, Commission and the cabinets of POTECH and HRVP. The interviews were semi-structured in order to ensure the sufficient level of comparability across various case studies (Travers 2001, Gilham 2000). Open-ended and general questions were included in order to allow interviewees to explore the subject, and thus present a more informal dimension of the policy making process (Richards 1999). In general, the questions aimed at exploring the attitudes and perceptions of the actors towards the role of the Presidency as well as at assessments of these Presidencies with regard to the appropriate behaviour. Most of the interviews were recorded otherwise the extensive notes were taken. All of the interviews were conducted under the rule of anonymity for ‘background information’. In case some particular quotations were chosen to be used in the thesis, the permission of the interviewee was ensured and used under the term agreed by both parties. Recording the interviews ensured its accuracy, nevertheless when the researcher felt that the interviewee would withhold some information, hand written notes were taken instead.

Interviews are a few of the most commonly used sources of evidence from respondents who actually participated in the case under investigation (Beach & Pedersen 2013:134). Elite and expert interviewing has become the most widespread and useful method of information gathering with the reference to exploring the EU policy making process. It allows the access of information during closed discussions and meetings, the details of the negotiations between Member States as well the content of relevant documents where their access is restricted. Moreover, they provide information that makes it possible to explain particular behaviour and the perceptions of this behaviour held by various actors. The interviews were conducted in English except for the interviews conducted with the officials involved in the Polish Presidency. The transcriptions of the latter ones

were done in Polish, and only parts relevant for the research were translated by the researcher into English.

One of the biggest drawbacks of elite interviewing is that officials' account might be distorted by their memory or deliberately being misrepresented to promote a particular vision held. The process of exercising the CEU chairmanship is usually a very prestigious event for the Member State and thus, its officials have a particular feeling of the ownership, which is why they might attempt to influence the researcher in order to portray their preferred vision of their time in the office. In order to address these issues the researcher aimed at conducting interviews at the various stages, before and during the exercise of the Presidency, and in the shortest possible time after the Presidency was concluded to achieve the most accurate account and perceptions of the events. It was however quickly discovered that while the interviewees conducted before and during the Presidency were useful in identifying other potential interviewees and relevant documents the fact that the officials were 'already playing the role' limited the usefulness of collected data with reference to the research questions. The most useful data was collected by interviewing officials upon the completion of the Presidency. The interviews reference code provides the necessary information on the context of the interviewee, namely his/her national or/and institutional affiliations and the date the interview was conducted. For example, the code ESa/12.2010 refers to an official involved in the Spanish Presidency based in the CFSP Unit who was interviewed in December 2010. If all of the interviewees indicated the same theme or confirm the same event the reference code simply states 'research interviews'. The latter 'a' identify this person as a first person from the Spanish Presidency to be interviewed for this project.²³

The initial group of interviewees were chosen on the basis of their relevance to the research questions rather than representativeness. The interviewees were chosen on the basis of their involvement and access to the chosen Presidencies and/or the European foreign policy making system within the project's timeline. The initial selection covered national and European officials in charge of the themes relating to the foreign policy and the Presidency. The in-depth interviews were structured along overarching themes of the changing role of the Presidency, the difference between interpretation of the Presidency's role and the subsequent performance of the individual Member States and the impact this performance could have on the emerging post-Lisbon system. After tran-

²³ The interview schedule and the list of interviewees are included in Appendix I.

scribing the interviews, the data was organised and coded along these themes and compared between the four Presidencies. Such an approach allowed to ask the officials directly about their interpretations which are the focus of the interpretative research, however as pointed out earlier it also resulted in potential biases of how events were presented. In order to account for potential bias, as the information gathered during the interviews were subjective and mostly focused on individual interpretations of events, I attempted to include selections of Member States, representatives EU institutions and other actors involved in the EU system.

By applying different data-collection methods, and interviewing officials across various nationalities and institutions, it has been possible to compare and cross-check the gathered information. Additional insights were provided by interviewing experts who work on the subject of the inter-institutional relations in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy in think tanks and research institutes based in Brussels and national capitals. The technical arrangements for these interviews followed the previously outlined arrangements for the elite interviewing. These empirical findings were subsequently compared with the recent academic studies and policy orientated of the Presidency in order to test for the reliability of the collected findings. After the initial observation that the access to potential interviewees was restricted, the researcher decided to undertake a visiting research stay at two think tanks, the Centre for the European Policy Studies in Brussels (September 2011 – March 2012) and the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw (April – June 2012), in order to facilitate contacts with relevant policy makers and experts. The subsequent interviewing appointments were achieved by employing the ‘snowball technique’ which proved to be particularly useful in identifying and accessing interviewees who would otherwise have not been considered due to their more informal engagement in the process. Consequently, the triangulation of data sources also helped with a potential problem of a biased view. As noted by Hammersley ‘an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena, that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise’ ((1987:69). Using various data sources, namely documents and interviews’ transcripts, allows us to capture difference in interpretation between various actors involved in the EU system. Thus, the combination of primary and secondary sources and the material obtained during the research interviews allowed for crosschecking and comparing the information gathered among different national and institutional affiliations.

The research also follows the academic standards of the ethical considerations. Firstly, the anonymity of the interviewees was maintained by ensuring that no one could be individually identifiable and the agreement was obtained with reference to how the individual interviewees would be cited within the text. Prior to conducting interviewees, the potential participants were informed of the purpose of the research project and the main uses to which research materials will be put. Finally, the interview transcripts and interview notes have been kept and can be accessed upon request.

The aim of this chapter was to offer an alternative framework which would be more capable of capturing the research puzzle of institutional change as both depending on exogenous formal changes and subsequent informal inter-institutional adaptation emerging in due course of the formal implementation. Such an approach would enable to open ‘the black box’ of the internal process of the institutional change. I argued that the previous role of scholarship might be adjusted to capture the institutional change of the post-Lisbon Presidency. As role theory already proved successful in resolving the agency-structure dichotomy in FPA, capturing the complex, hybrid nature of the Presidency (Elgström 2006) and explaining variations between individual Presidencies’ performance (Leal 2010) it seems to be well-equipped to providing analytically relevant assumptions for capturing the changing role of the Presidency. Moreover, it also offers an answer to the recent institutionalist attempts to conceptualise interactions of purposive but institutionally embedded actors in the process of institutional change.

Consequently, the proposed role-based model of role institutionalisation enables to trace the process of institutionalisation of the Presidency’s role as a result of the interaction between the structure (formal provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, role expectations of the involved EU actors, namely Member States and European institutions, and other international actors) and the agents (role preferences held by the Member State in the chair). During the period of structural change, the agency is more dependent on its own perception of the emerging role set and thus, the role will be more dependent on its original role preference. The latter, and in particular the sources of this role preference, namely the national role conceptions of foreign and European policies, will have influence on the Member State’s behaviour while in the chair of the Presidency; thus influencing the overall new role of the Presidency and the development of the role prescription which sets a long-term scenario.

CHAPTER IV The Formal Expectations towards the Post-Lisbon Role of the Presidency in European Foreign Policy Making

As set in the proposed model (Figure 6), institutional expectations, namely the formal legal provisions, constitute one of the sources of the Member States' role preferences towards the role of the Presidency in the emerging post-Lisbon context. In this chapter, I will focus on the LT's provisions related to this subject. Due to the limited availability of direct references to the role of the Presidency in EU foreign affairs, it is necessary to analyse provisions referring to the newly established institutions of the POTEC and HRVP, as these are now officially expected to perform functions earlier associated with the Presidency. The analysis is extended to include the relevant Council's legislation setting further procedures for the post-Lisbon policy making system.

The LT, being a result of the political compromise between the supporters and opponents of the Council rotating system, did not provide a clear role prescription for the Presidency. Drawing on the argument of 'incomplete contracting' I argue that vague provisions brought about the period of the subsequent institutional adaptation which, to a large extent, has been influenced by a changing political context. The failed attempt to introduce the Constitutional Treaty, and the ongoing economic crisis affected this period by triggering increasing intergovernmentalism in EU policy making. The political and economic contexts will be further discussed in the subsequent sections. Furthermore, the general tendency to ensure permanent management over EU foreign affairs has been undermined by the fact that the Presidency's functions have been maintained in some of the policy areas, for example trade, development, and energy. This ensured management for some of the Council's WGs and preparatory bodies and thus provided the Presidency with some functional scope in the EU foreign affairs. This functional scope further influenced the complex structure of the post-Lisbon system of EU foreign affairs that has developed as a result of the interaction between areas under both European and national management. As a result, a set of 'unintended consequences' developed which further affected the Presidency's role. This chapter thus aims not only to analyse the formal provisions referring to particular actors involved in the new post-Lisbon, but also seeks to provide a wider context for the implementation of the LT. The first section will examine reasons behind the failure of the Constitutional Treaty and the implications for the adoption of a new Treaty.

4.1 The Rejection of the Constitutional Treaty

While finalising the Nice Treaty in 2001 the Member States already agreed that further institutional reforms would have to be envisaged to make the enlarged EU work more efficiently. This was formalised in the Nice Declaration, an annex to the Treaty. Previous reforms of the EU treaties had been designed during IGCs; however, this particular one was to focus on a deeper and wider debate about the future of the EU, and thus its legal framework was to ensure the most extensive member participation at the earliest possible stage (Laursen 2012). During the EC's meeting in Laeken in December 2001 the Member States agreed, in attempt to ensure more transparency and inclusion, that the recommendations for the change of the Treaty would be the result of a convention (Piris 2010). The European Convention was set up in 2002 under the leadership of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former French president. A broad mandate issued for the Convention was to ensure a comprehensive approach to the functioning of the EU (Piris 2010). The problem of institutional re-designing, in particular with reference to EU external affairs, quickly emerged as the most contentious and laborious one (SGCa/05.2012). One of the first arguments were that a more effective and efficient European foreign policy requires a stronger structure at the European level in order to provide a comprehensive and coherent approach over the EU's external relations. Thus, it was argued that the rotating system of the Council's Presidency should be replaced with a more permanent one. Among the main criticisms of the thus far rotating system were firstly the lack of consistency and continuity of the Council's work, changes in the agenda to reflect the national focus of a particular state in the chair and finally the lack of sufficient resources of the small Member States (Piris 2010: 206, also see Laursen 2012, Craig 2010 and Bunse 2009).

Due to the sensitivity of the EU foreign affairs management, there was no particular group set up for institutional affairs; it was dealt with within the Working Group VII 'External Action' and at the highest level of the Convention, namely the Preasidium. It comprised of the Member States' representatives and the President of the Convention himself (Piris 2010: 26). Already, during the first meetings of the WG on 'External Action', in September and October 2002, it was noted that some kind of a merger between the position of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (HR) and the Commissioner for External Relations might ensure greater

coherence between various policy areas (SGCa/05.2012). The merger was further reflected in the joint paper presented in January 2003 by France and Germany. Their proposal called for a long-term presidency for the EC and a Commission's president to be elected by the European Parliament (EP) (Norman 2003: 2). This was a compromise between France aiming for a strong President of the EC and for the HRVP not being part of the Commission, and Germany preferring a stronger HRVP institutionalised within the Commission and a less powerful manager rather than a political leader for the EC. Therefore, the HRVP's vague job description was the result of the inability of these two major countries to decide on more a detailed solution (Piris 2010). This compromise was met with opposition from the small states as they feared that increasing the powers of the Council, and thus limiting those of the Commission, would generally reinforce the balance towards big Member States (Bunse 2009). The small states suggested in a counter proposal some limitations to the Presidency's functions by transferring most of the executive tasks to the Commission (Crum and Coussens 2003). It quickly became apparent that the subject of the Presidency would emerge as one of the most contentious issues.²⁴

The proceedings of the Group on 'External Action' furthered the idea of one position combining the functions of the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Affairs with the final proposal introducing the position of FM. This suggestion was challenged by the British representative and further supported by the representatives of Sweden, Spain and Ireland who questioned the appropriateness of the new FM to chair

²⁴ Another proposal presented by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in April was read as an attempt 'to set up a *directoire* of the big Member States to run the Union by the integrationist supporters, namely small countries and the EP's representatives' (Norman 2003: 3). As cited by Norman: '[d'Estaing's] vision encompassed a Commission, which would be the highest authority of the Union, with a Council chair to prepare, chair and drive its work' (Ibid.). Such a 'Chairperson would be supported by a vice president, a FM and all three would be members of a EC board of seven which would also include two other members of the EC and the president of the Ecofin and justice and home affairs councils' (Norman 2003: 3). Consequently, this further strengthened the division between two main groups: the first one, favouring the intergovernmental approach to the EU foreign policy led by the British representative Peter Hain, and the second group headed by the German representative Peter Glotz advocating a gradual development towards communitarisation of CFSP (Grevi 2002). Peter Hain argued that 'communitarisation simply would not work because the credibility of the CFSP relies upon the Member States backing it up with their legitimacy, experience and resources, not on legislation from the Commission' (Ibid.). As noted by Grevi this approach was supported by Spain whose representative Ana de Palacio stated 'that CFSP does not have a legislative, but an executive character' (Ibid). For further details on the discussions taking place during the meetings of the Working Group VII External Action see the minutes available at http://europeanconvention.eu.int/EN/doc_register/doc_register9713.html?lang=EN&Content=WGVII.

the Foreign Affairs and External Relations Council (Ibid.). Since the majority of the representatives expressed their support for the new position of the FM, this was included in the final draft. However, it was not envisaged as a simple merger, but instead the previous functions of the High Representative and the Commissioner would be attributed to the same person. This would enable this official to work in two work modes depending on the issue at stake (Grevi et al. 2002: 7). Such an approach was further reflected in the report of the WG on the 'Legal Personality', and their recommendations on abolishing the pillar structure and merging the distinctive legal personalities of the Union and of the Community into one (Grevi et al. 2002: 5).

Subsequently, the focus of the IGC in 2004 was centred on the institutional issues regarded as the most complex ones (Piris 2010: 19). As noted by Piris, the fact that the final Treaty with additional protocols amounted to 400 pages indicates the Member States' will to 'control exactly how many competences they confer on the EU and to limit in precise manner, according to the subject matter concerned, how much power they confer on the EU institutions to exercise these competences' (2010: 21-22). Even though the Treaty was referred to as 'the Constitutional Treaty' it would not transfer any additional national powers to the EU levels; rather, the name was supposed to indicate that it was a 'major political innovation' (Piris 2010: 23). The final proposal, aiming for 'One Treaty, One Legal Personality and One Pillar' (Piris 2010: 21), was rejected in the aftermath of the referendums in the Netherlands and France in 2005. Even though the structural changes were not the main reasons for these rejections, a new approach called for abandoning the Constitutional Treaty (Barbé 2010: 58), and for launching necessary institutional reforms under a more modest heading of the previous Treaties. The failure of the Constitutional Treaty stopped the federalist ambitions from making any substantial changes in the European decision making process (SGCa/05.2012).

Following the two-year 'reflection period' after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, further attempts were intensified under the German Presidency which aimed to ensure the ambitious operational provisions in place by stripping the constitutional character (Piris 2010). Consequently, the LT was ratified in October 2007 and yet again rejected in the referendum in Ireland in June 2008. Following the additional consultations and packages for Ireland, the second referendum held in October 2009 was successful, and

started the formal implementation phase. Strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of European foreign policy was seen as key in providing the organisation with a more influential position in world affairs. As noted by Howorth (2009), 'of the sixty-two amendments [introduced by the LT] no fewer than twenty-five concern CFSP/CSDP'. Duke (2008) pointed out, however, that these resolutions had already been agreed on at the stage of the European Convention. There was little difference between the LT and the Constitutional Treaty. This can be best illustrated by the fact that perhaps the most substantial difference between them, in terms of foreign policy structure, was changing the name of the position from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. However, while the Constitutional Treaty dealt with the external relations under a single and unified section, in the LT issues referring to the external relations were divided: while the section V TFEU deals with the external action, provisions on the CFSP are outlined in the TEU. As noted by Craig, this division 'reflects a difference of emphasis between the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty', as the current approach of 'keeping greater distance' underlines the distinctiveness of the CFSP's intergovernmental approach (2010: 381).

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive approach towards the post-Lisbon EU, External Action has integrated a number of different policy areas, such as common commercial policy, cooperation with third countries and humanitarian aid, restrictive measures, international agreements, association agreements and EU delegations with international organizations, third countries and union delegations (Craig 2010). Among the main changes introduced by the LT that had major impact on the foreign policy making of the EU was giving the organisation a legal personality. Duke (2008) and Howorth (2009) both viewed this step as a chance to enhance the EU's status in international relations. However, as noted by Richard Whitman, the LT aimed at 'remodelling the wider foreign policy' (2008: 2). This was to be done by focusing on restructuring the existing institutional architecture rather than changing the very nature of the EU foreign policy. This new system of policy making will be further addressed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.2 The Post-Lisbon Institutional System of European Foreign Policy

The subsequent part of the chapter will offer some preliminary introduction to the concept of the Presidency's role and position in the aftermath of the implementation of the LT's provisions. The aim of the analysis is to define the functions and the position of the Presidency in the wider EU institutional framework. As argued by the authors of the Joint CEPS, Egmont and EPC Study '... the LT now assigns virtually no role in the domain of external action [to the rotating Presidency]' (2010: 142). The previously single institution of the Council Presidency has been split into three: the two-and-half-year permanent EC's presidency headed by the POTE, the five-year permanent presidency of the FAC by the HRVP and the six-month rotating Presidency headed by the subsequent Member States. This reform was seen as a necessary solution to the main shortcomings of the Presidency system, such as 'counter-productivity' and being the 'symbol of internal incoherence, generalised confusion, erratic policy-shifts, and external incomprehension' (Howorth 2009).

As argued earlier, the LT did not produce a clear role prescription for the Presidency in EU foreign affairs. Its role, or rather the lack of a clearly specified role, can be interpreted by looking at the functions attributed to the newly created institutions. Art. 15 TEU transfers functions previously associated with the Presidency; those of chairing, preparing, managing and representing the EC internally vis-à-vis other institutions and externally in the hands of the POTE. POTE's main task is to 'identify the Union's strategic interests, determine the objectives and define general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy, including for matters with defence implications' (Art. 26 TEU). Furthermore, under the new leadership, the EC is supposed to 'adopt the necessary decisions' (Ibid.) and thus become the main decision making body. It is also responsible for the external representation of the EU 'without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy' (art. 15.6 TEU). The effectiveness of the latter would depend on the practical division of labour between the POTE and HRVP.

On a daily basis, EU foreign affairs are to be managed by the HRVP (Art. 18 TEU) presiding over the FAC (art. 18.3 TEU). Further articles empower the HRVP with the agenda setting powers and tasked this official with the preparations and the implementation of decisions related to foreign affairs (art. 27 TEU). The HRVP is also

responsible for representing the EU externally, and for ensuring consultation with the EP (art. 36 TEU). It is evident therefore that both the POTEK and the HRVP took over functions associated previously with the Presidency with reference to the EC and the practical conduct of EU foreign affairs. While this indicates again the Presidency's removal from its previous positions within the new institutional architecture, as Piris (2010: 248) also acknowledged, the Presidency would maintain some of its functions in areas of shared competences, such as trade and development. Moreover, although the HRVP was tasked with ensuring the consistency of the Union external action (art 15.2 TEU), this would also be dependent to some extent on the Presidency in the function of the chair of COREPPER II as well as the GAC with reference to the EC's strategically contribution. These areas would remain under the management of the Commission at the community level. Therefore, it became clear that the EU foreign affairs would develop into a complex system managed at both supranational and intergovernmental levels as illustrated in Figure 7. Finally, it must be noted that the LT has shifted the institutional balance within the EU foreign policy making by confirming greater powers of the EP in some of the external policies, for example expanding the procedure of co-decision making to the EU commercial policy (ART. 207 TFEU), and ensuring the EP's consent for international agreements (Art. 218 TFEU), thus ensuring its increasing role at the European stage.

The EU's actors in external relations after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty

	CFSP/CSDP: Exclusive member state competence	External policy: Exclusive EU competence	External policy: Shared / complementar y EU competence
Decision-making body	Foreign Affairs Council; European Council	Council (formation depends on issue discussed)	Council (formation depends on issue discussed)
Decision-making rule	EU position decided upon by consensus	EU mandate decided upon by QMV	EU position or mandate, usually decided upon by consensus
External representation	HR/VP; President; European Council; EEAS	European Commission (President or Commissioner)	Rotating Presidency, HR/VP or Commission?
On the ground	EU Delegation	EU Delegation	Embassy, rotating EU presidency or EU delegation?
European Parliament	Consultation	Assent required when EU ratifies / concludes	Assent required when EU signs, ratifies and concludes

Figure 7. The Post-Lisbon System of External Action according to Drieskens and van Schaik (2010)

The emphasis on the CFSP's intergovernmental character has been confirmed by maintaining its distinctiveness and thus by being 'subject to specific rules and procedures' (Art 24 TEU). This refers to the limited role of the European Court of Justice (ECJ)²⁵ and to the lack of regular legislative acts. This is further confirmed in

²⁵ As noted by Sieberson the ECJ is only allowed to act if an issue refers to restrictive measures involving individuals and 'disputes over the interface of the Union's general authority and its specific authority relating to the CFSP' (2008: 180). In addition to this, the ECJ's ruling is also applicable in determining the scope of the CFSP by 'deciding the questions of delimitation between areas (former pillars) (Barkan 202:

Art. 30 TEU that specifies that ‘any Member State, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, or the High Representative with the Commission’s support, may refer any question relating to the common foreign and security policy to the CEU and may submit to it, respectively, initiatives or proposals’ (art. 30 TEU). This enables agenda setting for the individual states. As argued by Piris (2010: 67) even though the LT removes the pillar structure, it preserves distinctive characteristics of the previously second pillar of EU foreign policy. As highlighted by new provisions added to the IGC’s mandate for the June’s 2007 meeting, the CFSP would be still maintained as a specific case and not included in the traditional three categories of exclusive, shared and supporting competences, which would set it somewhere between the national and European levels (Piris 2010: 74-76). Laursen points out that ‘CFSP is mentioned separately as a competence without giving this competence a specific name’ (2012: 8). Consequently, ‘the institutional specificities which characterised the second pillar [were] mostly preserved’ and ‘while the procedures and rule governing all other fields of action of the EU are described in the TFEU, those governing the CFSP are contained in the new TEU, thus further underlining the fact that CFSP will remain different from the other areas’ (Piris 2010: 66). This ensured the securing of the intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy making.

The intergovernmental features were further secured by two declarations adopted on the basis of the British initiative: Declaration 13 reiterates that the institutional innovations ‘do not affect the responsibilities of the Member States as they currently exist, for the formulation and conduct of their foreign policy nor of their national representation in third countries and international organisations’; Declaration 14 refers to the Security Council of the UN and confirms that the new provisions ‘do not give new powers to the Commission to initiate decisions nor do they increase the role of the EP’ (cited in Laursen 2012: 9). These declarations highlight therefore that on the one hand, some Member States were aiming for greater coordination and efficiency; on the other, they still opted to keep foreign policy at the intergovernmental level. Such tendencies might suggest the existence of more manoeuvring space for the Presidency in foreign policy making than what was originally designed in the LT.

112). The first one refers to co-called ‘smarts sanctions’ which might be applicable against terrorist (for details see Wouters et al. 2008).

As demonstrated above, the LT's provisions stripped the Presidency of some of its formal functions, but failed, at the same time, to provide a clear division of labour in the area of European foreign policy. Further specifications were brought by two documents outlining the rules of procedure for the CEU (CEU 2009a) and the EC (EC 2009). The former put an emphasis on the Trio Presidency as the working method of the CEU chairmanship as 'the Presidency of the Council, with the exception of the Foreign Affairs configuration shall be held by pre-established groups of three Member States for a period of 18 months' (art. 1.1 2009a). 'The groups shall be made up on a basis of equal rotation among the Member States, taking into account their diversity and geographical balance within the Union' (art. 1.4 2009a). Such a group is 'to hold the Presidency in turn for consecutive periods of 18 months taking into account the fact that there exist since 1 January 2007, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, a system of Council 18-month programmes agreed between the three Presidencies which hold office during the period concerned' (Ibid.). The particular features of this chairmanship within the group can be determined by the group's members (art. 2.3). This was further specified in the subsequent section stating: 'each member of the group shall in turn chair for a six- month period all configurations of the Council, with the exception of the Foreign Affairs configuration. The other members of the group shall assist the Chair in all its responsibilities on the basis of a common programme. Members of the team may decide alternative arrangements among themselves' (art. 1.2 2009a). This would indicate that subsequent three Presidencies included in one Trio could agree among themselves on different working arrangements, yet these arrangements were not further specified. Consequently, in the areas in which the Presidency's role was maintained it was limited by the mechanism of the Presidency Trio that fostered a more group-approach.

The chairmanship of COREPER and the newly established General Affairs Council (GAC) is confirmed upon the Presidency, and tasked with 'ensuring consistency and continuity in the work of the different Council's configurations in the framework of multiannual programmes in cooperation with the Commission' (art. 3 2009a). The chairmanship of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) is entrusted to a representative of the HRVP (art. 2 2009a). This decision, sets the practical rules for the chairmanship of the WGs in foreign affairs by splitting them into four categories: while

the first category, focusing on trade and development issues, was to be chaired by the Presidency, the second category of the geographic preparatory groups, the third category of the horizontal preparatory groups and the fourth category of the CSDP-related preparatory bodies were all to be chaired by a representative of the HRVP (Annex II, 2009a).²⁶ The latter provisions are subject to a transitional period as ‘for categories 3 and 4, the six-monthly Presidency shall continue to chair the preparatory bodies during a transitional period of up to six months after the adoption of the Council Decision on the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS)’ (Ibid.). For category 2, this transitional period shall last up to 12 months (Annex II, 2009a). Consequently, these provisions set a transitional period during which the Presidency was to continue with the pre-Lisbon role by filling in for the HRVP’s representatives. The latter would indicate, to some extent, the manifestation of the ‘path dependency’ of the development of the Presidency in the aftermath of ‘the critical juncture’ even if just transitional. Nevertheless, the role as the chairmanship of the Council’s preparatory groups would still had to be further specified with reference to some practical features. These specifications would be subject to the particular interpretations by the first Presidencies which, as argued earlier, would be to some extent dependent on the role expectations of other actors involved in the system.

The EC's Rules of Procedure envisaged that 'preparation and continuity of the work of the European Council is to be ensured by the POTEK on the basis of the work of the General Affairs Council' (art 1.1 EC 2009). This might suggest that the country in the chair can be involved in the process of the EC's agenda setting through the GAC chairmanship. This chairmanship was further specified in article 3 with reference to the EC summits' agenda: ‘the President of the EC, in close cooperation with the member of the EC representing the country holding the six-monthly CEU Presidency and with the President of the Commission, shall submit an annotated draft agenda to the General Affairs Council’ (Art. 3.1 EU 2009). Finally, the Presidency should replace the POTEK in case of illness or death (art. 2.4 EU 2009). The Presidency was also envisaged to perform the role of a deputy for the HRVP on a more daily basis (art. 2.5 CEU 2009b). Article 26 further elaborates on the HRVP's deputation, suggesting that the latter may be 'replaced by the member of that configuration representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council' (CEU 2009a). However with reference to the

²⁶ See Annex II for the full list of working groups under the categories.

HRVP's representation before the EP 'the Foreign Affairs Council may also be represented (...) before European Parliament committees by senior officials of the European External Action Service or, where appropriate, of the General Secretariat' (Ibid.). Further cooperation between the Presidency and the POTEK and HRVP is ensured by a joint preparation of the Presidency's agenda as the draft agenda 'shall be prepared with the President of the Foreign Affairs Council with regard to that configuration's activities during that period (...) and in close cooperation with the Commission and the President of the European Council' (art. 2.6 CEU 2009a).

The final document which set some structural sources for the Presidency's role was a report issued by the Swedish Presidency on the EEAS. It aimed to set not only the functional scope and legal status for the EEAS, but also its composition and structure as well as available instruments and resources. The final part of this document focused on setting a timeline for the establishment of the new service. This referred mostly to the office of the HRVP as she/he would be responsible for presenting a proposal for the Council's decision on the organisation and functioning of the EEAS. The HRVP was to be 'supported by a small preparatory team which should be composed of representatives of Member States, Commission and GSC' (Swedish Presidency 2009: 10). Even though the Presidency was not directly mentioned in the document, it was expected that it would be substantially involved in the preparatory team, and would support the HRVP in the process of creating the EEAS (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). Thus, the Member States in the chair would be included in shaping the structure and formation of the EEAS.

These rather general provisions have transferred the formal functions of a neutral broker, organisational manager, external and internal representative and leader to the portfolio of the new actors – the POTEK and the HRVP with reference to the EC and the FAC respectively. Therefore, the Presidency was stripped of some its previous official functions, while some were still maintained, even if more modest in terms of functional scope. These provisions provided some institutional expectations towards the new actors, the POTEK, HRVP and EEAS, and for the Presidency. Establishing the permanent chairmanship of the EC and the Council's preparatory bodies dealing with foreign affairs was expected to result in more stable and thus coherent and efficient management of EU issues. Nevertheless, the subject of the EU's external relations

remained a complex issue, combining various policy areas, in which some remained under the prerogative of the Presidency as presented below in Figure 8. As discussed in the subsequent section, the preliminary analysis highlights some possible unintended consequences of this complex system which might either constrain or empower the Member State in the chair, or indeed, might result in doing both.

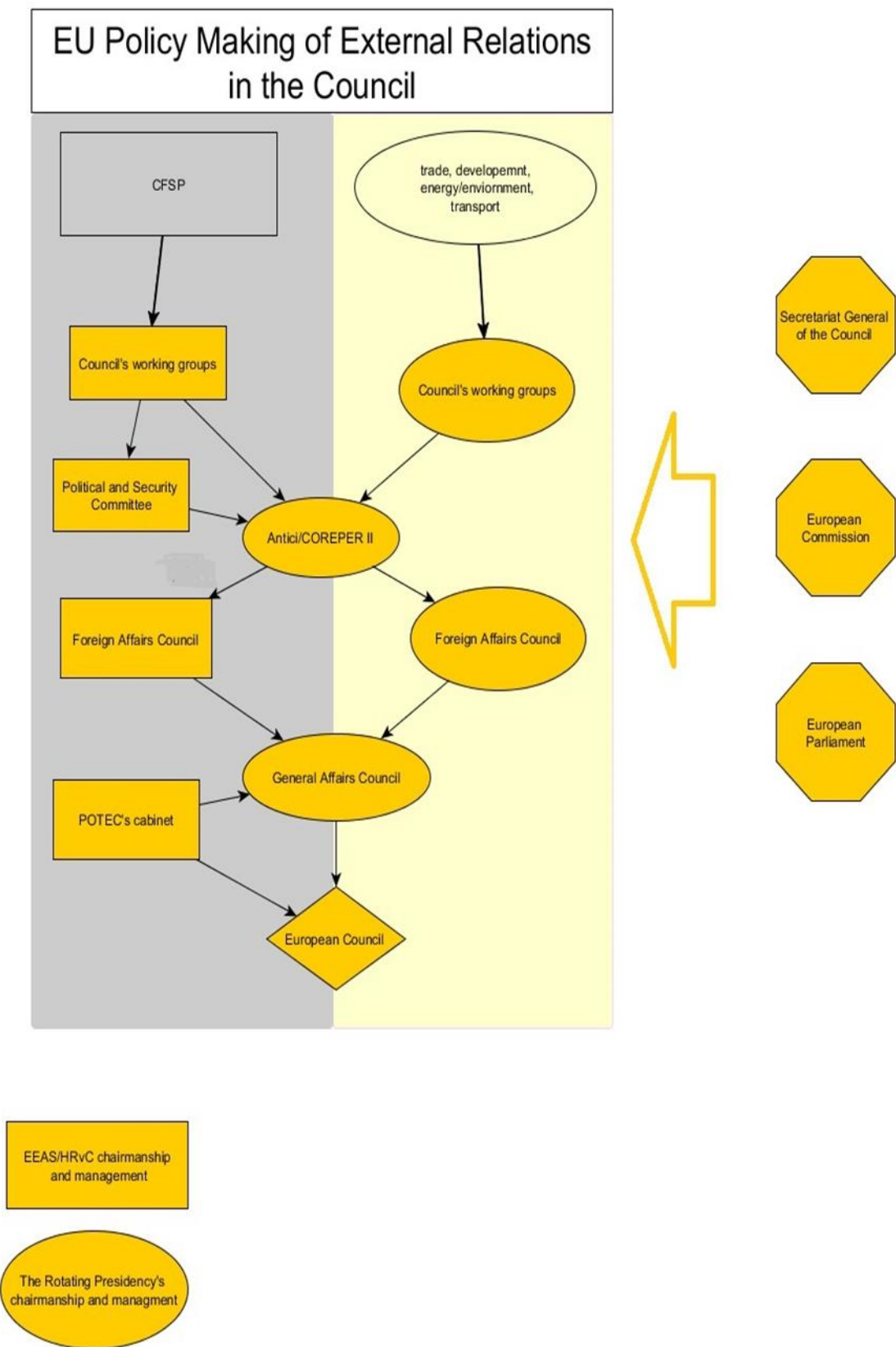


Figure 8. Post-Lisbon System of European Foreign Policy Making

4.3 The Unintended Consequences of the Lisbon Treaty

As argued before, due to the limited formal provisions, expectations towards the particular actors would have to emerge in due course of the implementation. The latter would result in unexpected formal and informal consequences, which would influence the emerging post-Lisbon system. The consequences involve, firstly, the shared management of the WGs and Council's bodies. The new position of the HRVP elected for a five-year term was aimed at strengthening foreign policy making by introducing coherence and coordination among two main institutions of the EU – the CEU and the Commission. The position has been described as double-hatted to illustrate the merging of two previous posts of High Representative for CFSP and that of External Relations Commissioner (e.g. Howorth 2009, Wessels and Bopp 2008, Avery 2007). (Devuyst (2012) even suggested that it might be triple-hatted if we consider the chairmanship of the FAC as a separate job. Conducting foreign policy at two different pillars – the Community pillar at the stage of the Commission, and the intergovernmental pillar at the stage of the EC and CEU – had been seen as one of the main reasons for the incoherent EU performance. The Treaty left room for further possible confusion, as the previous General Affairs and External Relations Council was split into two separate councils: the FAC to be chaired by the HRVP, and the GAC by the Presidency, thus breaking the hitherto chain of command (Kaczyński and Byrne 2011). Moreover, two major diplomatic committees have been similarly split between the HRVP (Political and Security Committee) and the Presidency (COREPER II), raising the problem of possible competition and lack of coordination between these two actors (Hughes 2008).

The second relevant unintended consequence was the lack of a formal role for the PM and FM of the country in the chair of the Presidency. The EC's Rules of Procedure mentions 'the Head of State of the Country Holding the Presidency' in terms of rapporteurship, 'which entails him/her to present Presidency's priorities at the beginning and results at the end to the EP' (Art. 4 2009b). Paul noted that already back in 2009 both the Czech Republic and Sweden noted the potential lack of any role in foreign policy for the Presidency (2008: 21). Paul argued further that 'Member States weren't fully aware of the scope of their decision: the abolition of any prominent role for the two top figures of the government holding the Presidency' (2008: 21). In more general terms, this also refers to the role of FMs as being excluded from the EC deliberations, which seriously diminished their role. Additionally, it soon became apparent that a full

implementation of the provision would not be possible until the new institutional architecture would be fully operational, namely until the EEAS would be functional to enable full logistic and content-related support for the HRVP. The role for the Member State in the chair would be substantially greater for the transitional period.

As argued by many researchers, the evaluation of the new positions would be heavily dependent on the personalities that would be in charge of them (Duke 2008, Whitman 2008, Howorth 2009). This would suggest that the particular role performance of individual actors could be influenced by the development of the new role prescriptions as well as the system itself, and this influence points to the possible process of role making. The process of deciding who should fill in the position of the POTE and HRVP turned out to be ‘a complex behind the scene deal among big Member States’ (SGCa/05.2012). Howorth (2009) had argued even before the formal process of appointment started that ‘[t]he unfortunate aspect of the appointment procedure is that, instead of outstanding individuals simply being selected because of their recognised qualities, there will be a series of horse-trades between different constituencies, thereby rendering the outcome almost impossible to predict’. As argued by the authors of the Joint CEPS, Egmont and EPC Study, the final choice was the result of ‘the curious process of making appointments in the Union, based largely on a process of elimination’ (2010: 65). They also noted that these appointments were met with a sense of disappointment as neither Herman van Rompuy nor Catherine Ashton were regarded as charismatic personalities capable of exerting strong supranational leadership.²⁷ As further suggested by Hughes (2008), this choice could be seen as an attempt by the countries to remain in greater control of the EU and to leave European foreign policy in the sphere of intergovernmental cooperation rather than risk it moving EU foreign policy making to the Community level. Finally, the LT did not remove the rule of unanimity²⁸ in the European foreign policy, and the expectation that the Member States should seek, rather to be formally required to pursue, a common approach. No formal sanctions have been introduced if the States opt for a performance that undermines the EU common approach (Whitman 2008).

²⁷ As argued by Jean-Louis Bourlages, the expert on European affairs: ‘Europe’s leaders are very happy with their choice, as the appointments of two complete nonentities to take charge of their shared home fully satisfies their ego and strengthens personal legitimacy’ (cited in the Joint CEPS, Egmont and EPC Study 2010: 66).

²⁸ The qualified majority voting is still limited to only a few cases - for details see Whitman, 2008.

All changes triggered by the LT in the area of foreign policy making were aimed at providing a more streamlined, coherent and unified process of decision and policy making, so the EU can act according to its rhetorical declarations. However, Berman (2010) explains that the LT has set a rather broad framework, leaving extensive space for further interpretation. An example for LT's lack of specificity is that both the position of POTEK and that of HRVP were only provided with general specifications regarding their roles and functions. Moreover, the role of being external representative of the EU has been attributed to both institutions, creating possible space for over-representation and conflict between these two main actors (Hughes 2008). The resolutions referring to the new EEAS were particularly left to broad interpretation when they enabled the HRVP to confirm the details in due course of the establishment of the service. According to Avery (2007), the lack of instructions was an attempt to provide the new structure with flexibility so it would be able to adapt to practical needs in due course of its development. Duke (2008) suggests, however, that leaving the provisions in the form of sketches was due to the sensitive nature of foreign policy in the sense that it is still seen as the overwhelmingly national issue. The process of implementing the Treaty's resolutions into practical solutions would thus depend on the implementing agents and their particular interpretation.

These ambiguities failed to introduce a clear upgrade for the European foreign policy and the changes have been largely criticised as not sufficient. As the joint report by CEPS, Egmont and EPC argued, even though the Treaty had upgraded the role of the EC and thus weakened the Commission, it did not provide a clear shift to intergovernmentalism. On the more supranational side, it 'recognises the international legal personality of the Union, strengthens the powers of the EP, and increases the possibilities of majority voting' (Joint CEPS, Egmont and EPC Study 2010: 22). The fact that the POTEK would not be a member of any of the national governments might also indicate 'a step away from pure intergovernmentalism' (Ibid.). Additionally, 'the HRVP in her role as Vice-President of the Commission undermines its independence, because she has been appointed by the European Council, and is intimately engaged with Member States interests in her other role as Chair of the FAC and as important anticipant in the EC' (cited in Craig 2010: 426-7). However, the implementation of the LT was never seen as a manner of 'radically [changing] the EU behaviour or

performance on the world stage’ (Howorth 2009). The changes that the LT instigated were agreed to ‘constitute a statement, a framework, and a mechanism, which should permit and encourage ever greater coordination and even integration of the EU foreign, security and eventually defence policy’ (Howorth 2009). As Gardner and Stuart (2010) further confirm: ‘The LT may not compensate for strongly divergent views or a lack of political will among the EU countries [, b]ut it will promote coherence and effectiveness when consensus is possible’. Consequently, the recent changes provided an additional structural framework for fostering cooperation among Member States, however, with the emphasis on ensuring the key intergovernmental features, no changes were attempted at the ideational level. Thus the reform did not aim at transforming the EU’s identity towards more supranational characteristics.

4.4 The Post-Lisbon Presidency – Towards a New Path?

Between 1950 and 2010, the Presidency emerged as a central institution in the European system of policy making. As pointed out by Westlake and Galloway the pre-Lisbon ‘Presidency has alerted almost beyond recognition over the five decades, not only in terms of competences and tasks but also in terms of demands on resources’ (2006: 325). Its flexible nature, based on the EU’s intergovernmentalism, enabled the functions to expand quickly in an informal manner as a response to the increasing institutional demand. Thus, its agenda developed in response to the expectations of other actors. Some of these expectations were institutionalised in the subsequent European documents, and some continued as informally associated powers. The Presidency thus became a source of political leadership informally associated with the pursuit of national interest. Even with the increasing communitarization of the Presidency’s functions, the institution continued as a window of opportunity for countries in the chair to promote national priorities by developing more the informal side of the Presidency’s functions. The informal resources and practices enabled maximising agenda setting and influence capacity of the country in the chair to focus the EU agenda on nationally important priorities.

I argue that the LT introducing the greater supranational management of EU foreign affairs while preserving its distinctive intergovernmental features allows the Presidency to maintain its hybrid nature. Even though the LT institutionalised to a large extent the communitarization of the function in the area of foreign policy, it is yet to be seen

whether the Presidency continue with its thus far informal and flexible development which would allow it to adapt to the changing institutional setting, or its role would decrease, leaving all of the functions, both formal and informal, up to the new permanent chairmen. As argued before, the lack of clear role prescriptions would indicate the importance of the subsequent adaptation of limited and ambiguous provisions to practical working arrangements; the latter would be further affected by particular political European and international context.

The rejection of the position of the first EU FM was read by some as the result of a lack of agreement towards moving the whole EU (and in particular the area of foreign affairs) to the level of supranational governance under the Community method. The change of the title for the new position to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was to demonstrate acknowledgment and acceptance of these concerns and guarantee the intergovernmental character of EU foreign policy. Changing the name but leaving the same functions demonstrates the expectation of countries that European foreign policy needs stronger institutional structure to ensure coherence, efficiency and better coordination (research interviews). Thus, even the Member States advocating the maintenance of the rotating system understood the potential benefit of having a more long term chairmanship of foreign affairs. Therefore, it was generally acknowledged that the Presidency would stop being the main actor in European foreign policy making. However, it was also acknowledged that it would be difficult to remove this position from the system entirely (research interviews). Thus, it was stated that the Presidency should be less active and leave the leadership to the new actors, but it was still reasonable to expect that the country in the chair would aim to promote some of the national priorities (SGCb/05.2012, ESa/12.2010, ESc/12.2010 and HUA/07.2011). ‘This might become an issue, and result in ‘turf wars so the Presidency must be really careful how to go about this’ (SGCa/05.2012). As one of the interviewees acknowledged, ‘we had to see how it all could work in practice, it was difficult to have clear expectations at the beginning of 2010; however, what is clear is that Member States are not ready to conduct common foreign policy at the Community level’ (SGCa/05.2012). Consequently, the increasing pressure towards ensuring further coherence, consistency and efficiency of the EU foreign policy system would have to be confined within the overwhelmingly intergovernmental expectations of Member States.

Furthermore, the process of filling in the positions of the POTEK and HRVP further demonstrated the countries' attitudes toward interpretation of the LT provisions. The fact that both Herman von Rompuy and Catherine Ashton were perceived as consensus-orientated leaders, would suggest that they would not seek to enforce strong leadership at the supranational level. Toby Vogel argued as early as in December 2009, that 'the appointments that were made by the national government leaders on 19 November suggest that, in practice; the changes may not be as dramatic as some had hoped' (Vogel 2009). He further suggested that 'the two appointments indicate that the EU wanted administrators and not visionaries, reliable implementers rather than people with their own ideas and agenda' (Ibid.). The decision resulted in that 'the EU leaders left themselves open to the criticism that they had been too unambitious and allowed political horse-trading to triumph over merit' (Barbé 2010: 56). As it will be further demonstrated, the first two years of the implementation took place in the particular context of increasing intergovernmentalism in EU affairs, triggered by the ongoing economic and sovereignty crisis.

The failure of the Constitutional Treaty and the particular political and economic context strengthened the intergovernmental spirit among the Member States, and this might also have a substantial impact on the interpretations of the LT's provisions. The implementation of the Treaty took place in a different political context than during the European Convention. The Treaty's designing agents were not the implementing ones. As noted by Piris the substance of the LT 'was negotiated mostly by politician within the European Convention, and not by diplomats within an IGC. This partly explains why some of its provisions leave room for flexibility in the way they will be implemented in practice (...) (2010: 324)'. Thus, as he highlighted, its fate 'will not only depend on its text (...) it will also depend on the persons who will develop its potentialities' (Ibid.). Paul (2008: 21) further noted that the HRVP's 'political weight and influence will much depended on how [the] set of interactions is organised and 'how much room for manoeuvre the key actors grant the foreign policy chief'. As argued by Spence 'The LT's ambiguities were in part the result of a failure between the Constitution for Europe and the Lisbon Treaty to translate the ambition of political rhetoric into administrative practice, a point illustrated by the linguistic differences' (2012: 120). This could further suggest that the Member States would be looking to preserve their special position in the system of European foreign policy making, and to

maintain its intergovernmental character. As stated by one of the interviewers, 'The LT was supposed to bring better coherence and efficiency in foreign policy making through better coordination among countries but not to upgrade it to the Community level. The Member States are to remain the key decision makers and their interests are to remain the founding pillars for European policies' (ESc/12.2010, GB/05.2012, FR/05.2012 and PLd/05.2012). In conclusion, the LT transformed the system of European foreign policy making without setting clear role prescriptions for actors involved in this system. Thus, the subsequent implementation would be subject to the interpretation of all actors involved in the process, and in particular those directly involved in implementing the new working conditions. The fact that most countries were not ready to accept a strong leadership at the European level might act as an indication towards the interpretation of the LT's provisions in the intergovernmental spirit, and thus 'allow' to some extent the Presidency to continue with its previous role.

The LT did not provide clear role prescriptions but opted instead for a minimum scenario in which the new system of foreign policy making would be determined in due course of the implementation by emerging practical precedents. The subsequent documents produced by the SGC provided some instructions regarding the conduct of foreign policy making in the transitional phase, until the new actors would be ready to fulfil their positions and functions. The latter one temporarily empowered the Presidency to fill in some traditional functions, namely chairing the Council's WGs and deputising the HRVP in her representative functions both internally and externally. While the formal provisions of the LT first of all act as a constraining factor with reference to the general position of the Presidency, the transitional period following the official implementation would be one of the enabling factors for the Spanish Presidency to perform a more active role. Without a clear role prescription, the new role would be more dependent on the interpretation of actors involved in the process and thus rely more on the development of the expectations of various actors. Finally, in the pre-Lisbon period, the Presidency's functions and powers were to a large extent set in the informal dimension of EU policy making system. The institutional expectations that stem from the European treaties and other documents were thus not the only source for the institutional expectations towards the new role. The latter ones were expected to emerge as an institutional feedback for the implementation of the new system, and a response to emerging unexpected consequences. Nevertheless, the Presidency would be

only one of possible actors expected to react to these consequences within the larger framework of European actors involved in the European foreign policy making system.

Although the implementation of the LT's provisions has created the most recent critical juncture in the process of the Presidency's development, it was not clear if in the aftermath, the institution would embark on an entirely new path or continue to some extent on the thus far one. This could be affected by the EU's ambiguous identity regarding foreign affairs, as changes in the functional dimension of the Presidency's role have not been reflected in the reconstruction of its identity. The subsequent development of the institutional framework at the supranational level has not been accompanied with changes at the ideational level, which to a large extent maintained its intergovernmental features and the significant role for Member States. The fact that the intergovernmental method for the decision making process has been maintained, might enable the Presidency to play a greater role, as Member States have preserved their privileged position in EU policy making vis-à-vis European actors. Therefore, the position of countries in chair of the Presidency has not only been affected by the ambiguous institutional set up of the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making, but also by the special role that the Member States continue to play in this area of cooperation. Additionally, the particular political and economic context emerging from the economic crisis resulted in the increasing intergovernmentalism that might further strengthen the position of Member States vis-à-vis European institutions. Consequently, with only limited institutional expectations, the role of the post-Lisbon Presidency would emerge in a process of informal adaptation. The latter one would become an important part of the institutional change, and might thus either empower or constrain the position and scope for action for the country in the chair. As argued in the previous chapter, insights from role theory might be better suited to tackle the issue of informal adaptation of the LT's provisions with reference to the post-Lisbon EU foreign policy. The following chapter, therefore, will continue with the empirical analysis by applying the combined theoretical framework of new institutionalism and role theory into studying the role and position of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making.

**CHAPTER V Spain in the Chair of the EU Council (January – June 2010):
‘Staying in the Front Seat’**

In the previous part of this thesis I present a consolidated approach towards studying the process of role institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency in European foreign policy making. Without a clear role prescription the first Member States in the chair would be responsible for interpretation of these formal provisions, their informal adaptation to the institutional feedback and development of the subsequent informal practices associated with the new role. The subsequent four chapters aim to apply this analytical framework, based on the institutionalist insights and role theory, to studying the period of the institutional change using the example of the first four Presidencies by Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland. This chapter will focus on the period of the Spanish chairmanship of the EU Council in the first half of 2010. It is structured according to the proposed model of role institutionalisation: the first section explores the Spanish national role conception as one of the potential key explanatory factors of its Presidency’s role preference, section two analyses expectations held towards the Spanish Presidency as the second potential source of its role preference. Section three focuses on the official programme of the Spanish Presidency and further discusses the role preference within the domestic, European and international contexts.

In the second part of the chapter I focus on analysing Spain’s enactment of the Presidency’s role by looking at the four functions traditionally associated with the Presidency: neutral brokering, organisational management, political leadership and internal and external representation of the EU Council and the EU, respectively. It is not my intention to assess any of the chosen Presidencies in term of their successfulness; rather the focus of the analysis is to explore their particular influence on the process of role institutionalisation of the institution itself. The section thus looks at the Presidencies’ performance in an attempt to categorise emerging functions performed by individual Member States in the chair. The final section will assess Spain’s contribution to the institutional adaptation of the Lisbon Treaty’s formal provisions and to institutionalisation of a role prescription for the Council chairmanship in the post-Lisbon context. The analysis will also aim to assess how factors previously identified in the literature affect the Presidency’s role preference and subsequent performance in the post-Lisbon period.

5.1 National Role Conception – Spanish Foreign and European Policies

Spain's political landscape has remained to a large extent influenced by the 39-year period of Franco's authoritarian regime. Since its transition to democracy in 1975 the Spanish national role conception in foreign policy has maintained relative stability with reference to its core preferences: the support for the European membership and traditional interests focussing on the regions of the Mediterranean and Latin America. However, some degree of role change can be registered, for example with reference to the relationship with the US across various governments. Zapatero's government, brought into power in 2004, aimed at providing Spanish foreign policy with a renewed role conception based on three elements: firstly, attempts to join the EU French-German axis, secondly, promotion of national interests in two traditional areas: the Mediterranean region and Latin America, and thirdly supporting the new system of European foreign policy making while ensuring national influence in the areas of particular importance. As argued by Fernández Pasarín and Morata the comparative analysis of the previous Spanish Presidencies 'fits with the rational model which conceives the Presidency as a strategic actor seeking to satisfy national preferences within the confines of its formally designed institutional role' (2003: 188). This role influenced both the Spanish European policy as well as its role preference for the 2010 Council chairmanship.

The 2010 Spanish Presidency marked the anniversary of the 25-year period of European membership. During this time both the governments and the society remained one of the most pro-European, as the European Community, and later the EU, became associated with the period of Spain's democratisation, economic development and growing significance on the international stage (Molina 2010). The European Community became also an opportunity to end the period of Francoist isolation on the European and international stage. As noted by Almarcha Barbado the latter was read as one of the most important benefits of the European integration as it helped to develop the foreign policy agenda and placed Spain on the international arena (1993: 278). The EU structural funds and the EU cohesion policy have transformed the Spanish economy making Spain one of the countries benefiting most from European funding (Morata and Popartan 2008).²⁹ Spanish society has been one of the most pro-European ones; a Eurobarometer study con-

²⁹ The establishment of the Cohesion Fund was attributed to a large extent to PM Gonzalez and half of the 1993-1999 budget went to Spain (Kennedy 2000: 112). One of his arguments was that it was in the European interest to invest in poorer regions as it would provide additional markets for investment. As noted by Kennedy (2000) the latter issue was also one of the first examples of uploading national interests by presenting them as common interests of the European Community.

ducted in the autumn of 2009 showed that 64% of Spaniards agreed that European membership was good for Spain and 66% that the country has benefited from it (Eurobarometer 2009). For many years the general strategy for Spain’s EU membership remained under the common agreement between the main opposing parties: the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Popular Party (PP) (Molina 2010). Thus, the subsequent governments regardless of their ideological positioning, the social-democratic Gonzalez (1982-1996) and centre-right Aznar (1996-2000), supported the further expansion of the European project and saw it as an integral part of the Spanish identity (Ibid.). Also the three main priorities identified in 1986 by the Gonzalez’s administration as European integration, Latin America and the Mediterranean have become an integral part of the Spanish national role conception.

Europeanisation became a chance not only to modernise the Spanish foreign policy but also to adjust some outdated national positions originating back during the Franco period. Spain was forced to face its historical pro-Arab stance after establishing diplomatic relations with Israel in 1986, which was one of the conditions of Spain’s entry to the European Community (Kennedy 2000:107). Thus PM Gonzalez was able to argue that this change was due to the Spain’s membership in the European Community rather than individual choice (Regelsberger 1989). European membership was also used by the Spanish government to distance itself from its traditional stance on the Western Saharan conflict and its previous support for the Polisario Front, thus enabling the improvement of bilateral relations between Spain and Morocco (Barbé 1996). The subject of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict became one of the issues of the Spanish entrepreneurship on the European stage; in 1991 Spain hosted the first European conference on the Middle East peace process and later in 1996 Miguel Angel Moratines became the first EU Special Representative in this matter.

As argued by Barbé one of the most successful areas of promotion of national interests on the European agenda was the Mediterranean region. This was quickly framed within the EU policy towards its neighbourhood: thus Spain, along with France and Italy, became one of the main supporters and advocates of the Southern dimension. The example of the two ECs of Essen (December 1994) and of Cannes (June 1995) demonstrated that Spain quickly adapted to playing according to Brussels rules. Within a strategy of promoting a balanced approach between the Eastern and Southern dimensions Spain managed to promote the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. As argued by Barbé (2000a)

the successful policy entrepreneurship promoted Spain to become one of the major players in the Union at the time. With reference to policy areas on which Spain did not have any clear national preferences it followed the official European line and supported the common positions, such as in the case of Russia (Barbé, 2000b). The strong focus on Europe evident in Spanish foreign policy shows evidence of both successful uploading to the European agenda and downloading from the European agenda.

Some substantial changes in foreign policy strategy can be noted during the second term of Aznar’s government (2000-2004). The clear shift towards the more Atlanticist view was demonstrated in its support of the Iraq invasion and thus Spain distanced itself from the traditional German-Franco leadership. The uploading attempts with reference to Latin America brought only limited results as Spain did not manage to put this region high on the list of the European priorities. Spain continued to pursue its national policy towards the region by focusing its development policy on this region as a manner of compensating for the limited attention of the EU (Gómez et al. 1999). In terms of the development of the common European foreign policy Spain has been supporting its further integration, however on the basis of the intergovernmental method of decision making as means of safeguarding national preferences, most of all with reference to Latin America (Fernández, 1990: 5087).

The change came with a government led by the socialist PM Zapatero, who took over the political stage in 2004. His appointment was quickly branded as a ‘second transition’ suggesting ‘a new phase of democratic development’ in the Spanish politics (Grimond 2004). As noted by Powell (2009) Zapatero introduced a new role conception which was based first of all on rejection of pursuing a special relationship with the US. The PM argued that Aznar’s approach ‘was totally out of character with Spain’s foreign policy’ (Powell 2009: 521). One of Zapatero’s first decisions, already promised during the election campaign, was withdrawal of the Spanish troops from Iraq. Madrid’s terrorist attack in March 2004 was read as a political consequence of Spanish support for the US war on terror and the involvement of the Spanish troops in the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The Spanish troops constituted roughly one per cent of the allies’ military capacity thus it was rather the style of announcing the decision unilaterally that caused severe diplomatic tensions with Bush’s administration (Molina 2010, Powell 2009). Zapatero sought to further distance himself from the previous government and this was

stressed by a new national defence law passed in November 2005 which required parliamentary approval to send troops abroad (Powell 2009: 527).³⁰

The second element of the new role conception was greater emphasis on multilateralism and cooperation with international organisations. As argued by Zapatero, as the division between domestic and foreign policies became less distinctive, as a result of globalisation, the position of the country should be more associated with ‘soft power’; as ‘the future standing, reputation and influence of a middle power such as Spain would therefore increasingly depend less on specific actions than on what it might represent to the outside world’ (Powell 2009: 522). Furthermore, Zapatero’s government renewed the Spanish focus on development policy in Africa, which reflected a wider determination to place development aid at the heart of Spain’s foreign policy agenda.³¹ This was probably the clearest example of how Zapatero’s national role conception influenced his foreign policy priorities, and may be seen as an attempt on his part to position Spain as a ‘norm entrepreneur’ (Ingebritsen 2006). The government promised to double Spain’s official development aid by 2008.³² The overall Zapatero approach put more emphasis on promoting effective multilateralism and seeing the EU as one of the global actors in charge of this (Powell 2009). This can be read as ‘Spain’s come back to Europe’ and points to the third element of the new role conception, namely ensuring greater cooperation within the EU and in particular with the Franco-German axis. Zapatero’s first official visits in April 2004 were to Paris and Berlin. This was also reflected in appointing Miguel Angel Moratinos, a former EU representative, as a new FM.³³ During their joint meeting in September 2004 in Madrid, Spain, France and Germany presented a unified response to the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld by stating that ‘old Europe is as good as new’. Finally, the invitation to attend a French-German summit with Russia in March 2005 was a sign that Spain was back at the ‘heart of Europe’.

³⁰ However, Spain still took part in training Iraqi police and maintained its financial commitment to Iraq’s reconstruction by donating US\$20 million towards the organisation of the first Iraqi elections, held in January 2005. Spain also re-confirmed its commitment to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan which had been pursued under the UN Security Council resolutions from 2001 and 2003. Moreover, the US continued to use its air and naval base[s] in Spain and further improvement in bilateral relations was brought in April 2007 with an agreement regulating the presence of US military intelligence in Spanish bases. The latter issue had been left pending when the Agreement on Defence Cooperation was updated in 2002.

³¹ This was further reflected by changing the name of the ministry to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

³² Spain’s development aid rose from 1,985 million euro in 2004 to 5,509 million euro in 2008 making Spain the eighth-largest aid donor worldwide (Powell 2009).

³³ Miguel Angel Moratinos served as the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace process (1996-2003).

The previous three EU Presidencies were held in 1989, 1995 and 2002 and each of these Presidencies demonstrated some degree of continuity as well as some 'significant changes of strategies and goals' (Fernández Pasarín and Morata 2003: 173). This has been attributed to 'the progressive Europeanization of Spanish politics and policies' and 'since 1996, the shift from a proactive approach, combining commitment to European integration with an increasingly clear-cut definition of national interests, to reactive attitudes based on self-interests together with emphasis on single issues such as market liberalisation and terrorism' (Ibid). All of the previous programmes reflected the traditional Spanish national priorities in the area of foreign policy, namely the Mediterranean policy and the EU relations with Latin America. This was an area of Spanish unique expertise widely accepted by European actors. Nevertheless, there were particular differences in the Presidency management over the years, thus the first Presidency was centred on passing the so-called membership test. Spain focused on demonstrating its understanding of the common European values and norms of conduct, management capacity and presented itself as a European country (Barbé 2009). The official agenda was to demonstrate this by presenting a clear focus on European interests, nevertheless 'traditional priorities of the Spanish diplomacy received preferential attention' (Fernández Pasarín and Morata 2003: 181).

The second Presidency was marked by a more nationalistic strategy and used to incorporate national interests into the European agenda 'in particular through Spanish Leadership in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Initiative' (Barbé 2009: 90). This was further demonstrated by the official 'agenda of action focused on pursuing national interests' (Fernández Pasarín and Morata 2003: 182). Thus the aim was to demonstrate the central position of Spain within the EU (Moreno Juste 2001). Spain abandoned the role of the 'good European' and put more focus on emphasizing its position as an important European power and one of the main decision makers within the EU (Fernández Pasarín and Morata 2003: 182). In terms of foreign affairs the goal was to 'offset the progressive shift of Europe's centre of gravity eastward' (Fernández Pasarín and Morata 2003: 182); thus developing a role conception of Spain as a firm supporter of the EU southern neighbourhood. As noted by Moreno Juste finally 'Spain had shown itself competent to lead the EU on a political as well as an administrative level' (2001: 90) and promote national interests on the European agenda. The subsequent 2002 Presidency continued with this approach. Among the main achievements were the organisation of the Valen-

cia Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference at a very critical moment in the Arab–Israeli conflict, attempts to trigger a new phase of the Barcelona process by emphasising the business integration of Mediterranean partners and a gradual development of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area (Fernández Pasarín and Morata 2003: 186). Nevertheless, the fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference ended with disappointment as some of the Arab leaders boycotted the meeting in a sign of protest against Israel. Spain failed to reach agreement on the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank (Barbé 2009). With the main goal of the Spanish Presidency to renew and strengthen the strategic association between the EU and Latin America, a series of high level meetings did not bring any substantial results except for a new Free Trade Agreement with Chile (Barbé 2009). In its relationship with Mercosur, Spain’s aim was to conclude similar agreements in order to advance political relations, but most of all to increase trade levels. However, the ongoing economic crises in Argentina and Brazil seriously affected the Spanish economic interests and made it impossible to conclude any specific agreement with those countries (Barbé 2009).

Consequently, each of the previous Presidencies was used by Spain to pursue their national foreign policy priorities by framing them as in the wider European interest. This continuity demonstrated stability of the Spanish national role conception in the area of foreign policy. Spain’s attitude towards European membership has been to some extent shifting according to the stances of particular governments, however one common issue remained the same: the Spanish ‘very peculiar position that does not fit into any of the categories into which all others may be grouped: the very prosperous and large; the very prosperous and small; the less prosperous and small’ (Powell 2002; see also Areilza 1999). Barbé referred to this one as ‘Spain’s peripheral syndrome’ (1999) and Powell observed the continuous drive to obtain ‘a big power status’ (2002). Consequently, Spain’s size categorises it as one of the big EU countries, however this has not been met by the appropriate political and economic power. The latter was to be further challenged by the emerging economic crisis that Spain started to experience with more visibility in 2010. The previous Spanish experience points to an active Presidency emphasising national priorities and in particular developing EU relations in the regions of the Mediterranean and Latin America. This might be further reflected not only in the particular role preference for the 2010 Presidency but also in the individual expectations held at the European and international levels.

5.2 Expectations Towards the Spanish Presidency

As indicated in the model of the role institutionalisation the main source of the Presidency’s role preference, apart from the country’s national role conception, are the expectations held towards the role holder. This refers both to the structural factors based on the institutional position and official functions of the Presidency in the area of European foreign policy making, as well as more informal and individual expectations, not formalised in any documents, held by actors involved in the process of the European foreign policy making. This would refer to European institutions, both old and new, as well as other Member States. Since the formal provisions, as already outlined in the previous chapter, were limited and did not provide a clear role prescription, the informal expectations might emerge as one of the key factors influencing the role preference. In methodological terms this section draws on interviews conducted with European officials from the Commission, EP, SGC and some Member States³⁴ in order to explore their perceptions of the Presidency’s role within the new post-Lisbon institutional architecture.

Firstly, the main theme emerging from these interviews was the overall ambiguity of the formal provisions as well as their practical application. Therefore, it was acknowledged that the post-Lisbon Presidency should be ‘less active, more in the back seat’, ‘removed from the spotlight’ and ‘closely coordinated with the new actors’ (SGCa/05.2012, EPb/05.2012). It should not emphasise the traditional functions of providing leadership and agenda setting in European foreign policy; it should rather work behind the scene to ensure coordination of various external policies (SGCa/05.2012). Additionally, it was expected that Member States in the chair, in particular the PM and the FM should be given some role to play on the European stage and this would have to be worked out in practice. Nevertheless, it was noted that the post-Lisbon architecture only started to emerge and that Spaniards might actually be the last Nicean rather than first post-Lisbon Presidency due to their extensive preparations (SGCa/05.2012, GB/05.2012, FR/05.2012). The overall tendency was the acknowledgment of the institutional change limiting the formal role of the Presidency; however there was no clarity with reference to how this would be implemented in practice.

³⁴ In order to present a balanced view among EU countries the selection of interviewees aimed at presenting perceptions of various representatives – both small and big, and old and new Member States.

Looking at the wider structure, the implementation of the provisions was affected by the particular EU political and economic climate which favoured a stronger role for Member States and the intergovernmental method of working. The ambiguous approach was reflected in the lack of clear expectations towards the Spanish Presidency. On the one hand, some of the expectations were expressed towards the post-Lisbon role and position of the institution itself, on the other hand it was apparent that without a fully operational post-Lisbon infrastructure Spain would have to step in and play a more active role. Consequently, there were no clear expectations towards the Spanish Presidency at the European level in both structural and informal terms. The ambiguous expectations created both an opportunity to pursue a particular role preference as envisaged by Spain, but also a major constraint as Spain was not able to identify expectations towards its role in the chair. Thus the emergence of a potential role conflict between ambiguous and even to some extent conflicting expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency and Spain itself might further undermine the Spanish Presidency’s performance.

Pre- Lisbon Presidency’s Functions	The Rotating Presidency	The High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission	The President of the EC
Organisational Management	Moderate	High	Moderate
Neutral Brokering	Moderate	High	Moderate
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	High	High
External and Internal Representation	Low	High	High

Table 2 The Overview of Expectations Towards the Post-Lisbon Functions First Half of 2010 (Author’s Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

5.3 Towards the Role Preference of the Spanish Presidency

The subsequent section focuses on the official programme of the Spanish Presidency, as its examination should enable an exploration of its particular understanding of its role in

the Council chairmanship. Spain was the first country of the Presidency Trio comprising Spain, Belgium and Hungary and thus its joint programme was supposed to ensure a more coherent agenda and strategy for the following 18 months. The first post-Lisbon Trio emphasised its objective of ensuring a more unified approach by designing a single logo for all three Presidencies (Euractiv 26.01.2010). At the more substantial level the countries pledged a smooth transition towards the new working arrangements by prioritising the quick and efficient implementation of the LT (CEU 2009d); nevertheless the main emphasis was put on the issues of economic governance and financial affairs. The subject of external relations featured as a final section of the programme and presented an extensive selection of various horizontal policy areas, such as crisis management, human rights, as well as more concrete objectives visibly referring to particular national preferences of individual countries of the Trio.³⁵ Such a comprehensive overview of the EU’s foreign affairs was due to the time factor as both the POTEK and HRVP were appointed in December 2009 after the Trio Programme was officially presented. The fact that it was prepared without any output of the new actors seriously undermined its credibility and applicability as it was expected that the POTEK and HRVP would prepare their own agendas (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012, EEASc/04.2012). This would however require more time and thus it further empowered Spain to focus on its own individual programme (Ibid.).

5.3.1 'Innovating Europe' - Official Programme of the Spanish Presidency

The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and thus of the new institutional architecture was seen as an opportunity for *Innovating Europe*, the official slogan of the Spanish Presidency, with the new legal framework enabling for building ‘[...] a stronger, more united and more efficient Europe’ (Spanish Presidency 2010: 3). Four main priorities were set: the fast and full enforcement of the Treaty of Lisbon, the economic recovery and job creation, implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and finally Europe’s global role. The new institutional context was emphasised throughout the text also with reference to particular expectation towards Spain; thus it was stated that Spain would be exercising ‘[a]s a transitional Presidency’ allowing for taking up ‘responsibility to make up for some temporary deficiencies of the new institutions’ (Ibid.). This would be done ‘in close coordination with [new institutions] and with a view to addressing such limitations as soon as possible’ (Ibid.). The main goal would be to ensure development of a

³⁵ For a detailed list of the Trio’s objectives see CEU (2009d).

new working mode for European foreign policy making by accepting the political leadership from the HRVP and POTE: as stated in the programme ‘Spain will fully support all the new High Positions so they can exercise their competencies under the best possible conditions. Furthermore, it will take on the corresponding role as rotating Presidency in the institutional structure established by the Treaty.’ (Spanish Presidency 2010: 5). In more functional terms it was acknowledged that ‘the Spanish Presidency will fully support the former in performing her functions, fostering the rapid implementation of the European External Action Service and actively contributing to a smooth and orderly transition to the Union’s new model of external action’ (Spanish Presidency 2010: 20).

The new post-Lisbon context was also emphasised by referring to the Presidency Trio’s programme as a wider frame for the Spanish priorities (Spanish Presidency 2010: 4). This would indicate that the basis for the Spanish role preference would be firmly based on the institutional provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. Nevertheless, the fact that Spain branded itself as a ‘transitional Presidency’ might have indicated that it understood the uniqueness of its time in the office and the restricted applicability of its scenario with reference to subsequent Presidencies. As indicated by some of the interviewees this could have been perceived by Spain as an opportunity to continue with the pre-Lisbon scenario as a preferred script for its chairmanship.³⁶ This impression was strengthened by the ambitious list of goals Spain set for itself in the area of EU foreign affairs.

Under the third priority of Europe as a global player Spain presented its ambitious vision of opening a new chapter in European foreign policy by fostering relations with the US, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean. Further priorities referred to the ENP, EU enlargement in the region of the Western Balkans and strengthening cooperation with Asia; consequently covering every possible dimension of EU foreign policy. As acknowledged by Carlos Buhigas Schubert, a member of the Spanish Team Europe of the European Commission: ‘the agenda looks too ambitious and, as a result, rather unfocused’ (Euractiv 8.12. 2009). Spain thus clearly saw its Presidency as an opportunity to revive some of the EU foreign policy areas and to play an active role on the European stage. Therefore, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty’s provisions was seen as an opportunity by ensuring ‘close collaboration with the President of the EC and the High

³⁶ This observation was highlighted by some of the European officials (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012, EEASc/04.2012).

Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to make the most of all the possibilities rendered by the new Treaty’ (Spanish Presidency 2010: 11). Subsequently, the official role of the Presidency was also emphasised as Spain ‘shall foster on-going cooperation with the High Representative, specifically in connection with those areas linked to foreign relations, which will remain under the responsibility of the rotating Presidency, such as the enlargement policy, trade or justice and home affairs’ (Spanish Presidency 2010: 5). By emphasising the area of mixed competences Spain firmly acknowledged its remaining formal role. Finally, ‘It will be the responsibility of the Spanish Presidency to collaborate with the High Representative and the EP to promote the enactment of the necessary legal rules to establish the European External Action Service and ensure its rapid implementation’ (Spanish Presidency 2010: 6). The final aim would be to ‘guarantee the transition to this new design supporting the work of the High Representative with its entire diplomatic network until the deployment of the new European Service’ (Ibid.).

Consequently, the official programme of the Spanish Presidency presented a rather ambiguous approach by emphasising its main aim as the full implementation of the Lisbon Treaty through supporting new actors and creation of the EEAS while at the same time setting for itself an ambitious agenda in external relations. Spain announced its plan for an active chairmanship of the EU Council that remained supportive of the new post-Lisbon context. This led to the question of whether the Presidency’s activism would be only targeted to interpreting the new role or also using its ‘transitional Presidency’ as an opportunity to put itself in a more privileged position in order to advance some of the national priorities in line with the pre-Lisbon scenario. On the one hand, the emphasis on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty would suggest a rather limited Presidency in the area of foreign affairs. The Spanish PM announced that if anyone wants to ‘call Europe’ (in reference to Kissinger’s famous question) they should call Van Rompuy’ (Euractiv 8.12. 2009) thus demonstrating his loyalty to the new system. On the other hand an ambitious agenda could not be realised by only supporting the HRVP and PO-TEC in their new positions; to some extent it would also require a ‘more active stance of the Spanish Presidency and to some extent exercising their leadership capacity on the European stage’ (SGCb/05.2012). As demonstrated above, the very fact that the Spanish Presidency put so much focus on the issue of external affairs created mixed expectations towards the Spanish chairmanship. This presented a rather schizophrenic view of

Spain towards its role in office and was expected to be clarified during the first few weeks in office (ESa/12.2010). As observed by the Spanish Ambassador in Paris Francisco Villar ‘our role is to provide impetus to each dedicated Council, not necessarily to stabilise it, as is the case of the permanent Presidency. [. . .] The answer must be given in practice, not in the text’ (Euractiv 26.01.2010).³⁷

5.3.2 Role Preference of the Spanish Presidency – Domestic, European and International Context

The particular context, at the domestic, European and international levels, became both an empowering and constraining factor for the Spanish original role preference. One such enabling factor was the experience thus far of the Spanish administration in both its running of the Presidency and its pursuit of national interests on the European stage. Spain had a long institutional memory of running the Council Presidencies. It has been generally argued that Spain successfully chaired previous Presidencies, and its administrative capacities would be sufficient to face the technical challenge of the European legislation. Its ambitious preparations had already started in 2008 and due to the inclusive decision on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty at that time had to be pursued in a two-fold manner: the first scenario assuming exercise of the traditional fully operational Presidency and the second of the new limited post-Lisbon role. With these two possible scenarios Spain was not sure if it should apply the Brussels or the capital-based models (ESa/12.2010, ESb/12.2010, ESc/12.2010). Thus, the decision to expand the REPER in Brussels by 80 new employees and lead the Presidency’s management from Madrid strengthened perception of the active and ambitious performance (Ibid.). The estimated cost of holding the Presidency was the roughly 55 million euros (Euractiv 15.12.2009).

On the domestic stage the four largest parliamentary groups (the Socialists in power, the Popular Party in opposition and the Catalan and Basque centre-right nationalists) signed an agreement that ensured a broad support for the government in matters related to the EU during the first semester of 2010 (E. Soler i Lecha and J. Vaquer i Fane’s 2010: 74). This was supposed to strengthen the position of the Spanish administration on the domestic stage for the six-month period. On the other hand, it was clear that in the crisis-ridden country successful performance of the Presidency would distract the public opin-

³⁷ The address was delivered on the occasion of the formal launch of the ‘Presidency Trio’ programme in January 2010.

ion and contribute to the popularity of the government; thus the compromise with the opposition parties was not expected to be maintained (ESa/12.2010).

The ambitious plans were undermined by the worsening economic and financial situation with the Euro-crisis having particularly adverse effect on the Spanish economy.³⁸ The Spanish plans to launch a new strategy for an economic recovery under the 2020 Economic Strategy was met with some mocking reaction on the international stage, for example the Financial Times (05.01.2010) referred to the inauguration of the Spanish Presidency as ‘A Stumbling Spain Must Guide Europe’.³⁹ Thus without a sound economic reputation it would be impossible for Spain to play a major role in the EU while it was deeply focused on the ongoing economic crisis. It was also noticed that the general Spanish capacity for influence was hindered by its status as the number one recipient of the European aid (Martín 2010).

With the approaching parliamentary elections in 2012 Zapatero was keen to use the Presidency as an opportunity to distract the Spanish electorate from the economic situation and to gain additional support through the pursuit of active policy at the European level (ESa/12.2010, ESb/12.2010, ESc/12.2010). However, the impact of the crisis was most visible at the European and international level, as it dominated the working agendas and left little room for other issues, thus pushing the foreign policy off the European agenda. Consequently, expectations both towards the Spanish Presidency and its particular role preference should be analysed within the particular context created by the domestic, European and international environments. These were both empowering and constraining Spain in its original plans. The latter context will be also analysed at the stage of the Presidency’s role enactment by constituting a set of possible intervening variables. It can be argued that the Spanish Presidency faced ambiguous formal and limited informal expectations. This enabled Spain to pursue its particular role preference of exercising support towards the new actors, yet still strive for ambitious and active performance in EU external relations. This strategy will be tested in the subsequent sections presenting Spain’s role enactment with reference to organisational management, the EU and Council’s representation, neutral brokering and political leadership.

³⁸ The economic situation of the current economic situation with the economy being caught in the recession since 2008 and 20% unemployment rate, decreasing economic growth and growing deficit was the major factor which hindered the position of the Spanish government on the eve of the Presidency (SGCa/05.2012).

³⁹ The Economist (07.01.2010) further commented that ‘Spain now leads the EU, but not by example (...) if you want your advice to be heeded, you need something credible to say’.

5.4 The Spanish Presidency in Office – Role Enactment

The subsequent part of the chapter will focus on the process of role enactment tracing any changes in the initial perceptions towards the role preference and expectations, as well as the actual behaviour during the Spanish time in office. The analysis will take into account previously identified factors both enabling and constraining the Member State’s performance while in the chair. Being the first post-Lisbon Presidency Spain became ‘an institutional *guinea pig*’ (Molina 2010: 7). The first few weeks in office were supposed to bring some clarifications into the arguably schizophrenic approach of Spain towards its role in the office (SGCc/05.2012). The launch of the Spanish Presidency was welcomed by the international press with comments pointing to possible problems connected to the new institutional setting, for example the New York Times (08.01.2010) noted that ‘some analysts worry that Spain’s assertive stance will provoke turf wars and set a precedent for other nations to follow’ and that the Spanish Presidency ‘could undermine one of the few concrete efficiency gains that the Lisbon Treaty promised, making it even more difficult to determine who is in charge’. This was further emphasised with the example of the Spanish remarks on the issue of the possible lifting of China’s arms embargo which sparked fears that the Presidency would try to use its six months in office to actively pursue foreign policy making on the European stage.⁴⁰ This issue was picked up by the international press, which used it as an opportunity to speculate on a possible institutional struggle surrounding the institutional change, for example the Economist (01.02.2010) argued that Spain was allowed to run a pre-Lisbon Presidency due to its extensive preparations.⁴¹ Thus, the beginning of the Spanish Presidency was marked by the lack of a clear role prescription, some confusing messages concerning its role preference and unclear expectations on the European and international stage. The image of the Spanish Presidency managed to suffer serious hindrance when the official website was hacked and the photo of the Spanish PM was re-

⁴⁰The comment was originally delivered by the Spanish Ambassador to China (Jin 2010). This was repeated a few days later by the French FM during one of the press conferences. For more details see Gibney (2010).

⁴¹ ‘For diplomatic reasons, people are being terribly nice about the way the Spanish are throwing their weight around and acting as if they are running a pre-Lisbon rotating Presidency. Last week, one senior European politician told a small group of reporters about how we had to understand the Spanish position because they had put so much work into preparing their six-month stint in the chair of EU meetings, on the basis that Lisbon might have been delayed yet again—leaving them to play the role of a traditional Presidency. Given that they had gone to all this trouble, the politician said, it was fair to regard Spain as a “transitional Presidency” between the pre and post Lisbon age.’ (Economist 01.02.2010)

placed by the fictional character of Mr Bean.⁴² This was one of the first indications that the performance would be seriously influenced by the generally ambivalent image of Spain.

Nevertheless, as claimed by the Spanish Presidency, the first experience of joint cooperation between the Spanish Presidency and the HRVP proved to be successful and efficient (SGCb/05.2012). The case of the humanitarian crisis in Haiti demonstrated that the Presidency was not expected to be the primary actor in addressing the crisis management agenda, leaving this up to the HRVP. However, by expressing readiness to help, the Spanish Presidency indicated its supportive, but secondary position on the European stage (SGCb/05.2012). During the Presidency’s presentation at AFET in January 2010 the Spanish FM stated that ‘the Presidency helped the HRVP in the coordination of the forces on the ground and guided the collaboration with other EU Member States in providing aid’ (AFET 2010)⁴³. This meeting also gave a chance to express the Spanish position on some of the issues on the European foreign agenda.⁴⁴ One such issue was the sudden change of the Ukrainian electoral law which caused concerns among MEPs with reference to democratic developments in the country. FM Moratinos clearly demonstrated his loyalty to the HRVP by refusing to make any comments as this would ‘be competence of HRVP Ashton to react and release an official statement on this situation’ (Ibid.). Thus, contrary to the expectations, the launching of Spain into its role brought further confusion regarding the Spanish approach to its Presidency. The supportive stance towards new actors, in particular the HRVP, was seen by some as a chance to play an active role on the European stage and project some of the national priorities (ESc/12.2010). This was met with a rather unfavourable reaction on the European and international stage. The subsequent sections will examine the performance of the Spanish Presidency by closely analysing its role enactment with reference to the four main pre-Lisbon Presidency’s functions.

⁴² It was soon explained that the website had not been hacked and the image was a result of a simple screenshot and a photo montage (BBC 04.01.2010). Nevertheless, the perception of compromised security of the Spanish IT system prevailed for few days.

⁴³ The notes on the meeting can be accessed at http://isis-europe.eu/sites/default/files/publications-downloads/2010_artrel_409_epupdate-afet-04feb10.pdf. [cannot access this link – check address]

⁴⁴ The presidential elections were to take place on February 7, 2010.

5.4.1 Organisational Management

During the first half of 2010 chairmanship and management of the FAC meetings was assumed by the HRVP; however, as it quickly turned out without a fully operational EEAS the HRVP would not be able to exercise this role on her own. Thus, the Spanish Presidency became a source of administrative capacity for the HRVP’s performance by taking over management of the Council’s WGs (SGCa/05.2012). In general terms, this could be read as an indication of a ‘path dependency’ as the Presidency continued with its pre-Lisbon role emerging as the institution most suitable in assisting the HRVP. Nevertheless, even if a Spanish official was acting as a chair for a particular WG he was acting on behalf of the HRVP (SGCb/05.2012). As indicated by one of the interviewees the chair was expected to act according to HRVP’s instructions while at the same time addressing some particular national concerns; consequently the WGs’ chairmanship was under a joint management of the HRVP and the Spanish Presidency (ESc/12.2010, EEASa/04.2012). Overall, Spanish officials had their manoeuvring space restricted by the expectations of acting upon the instructions of the HRVP; this further strengthened the expectations of acting as an honest broker. It was also indicated that this certainly gave Spain a more privileged position vis-à-vis other Member States towards the agenda setting; however this was mostly caused by the lack of an extensive agenda held by the HRVP at the time which left management of some of the issues up to Spain (EEASa/04.2012, SGCb/05.2012). This would decrease with the consolidation of Catherine Ashton in the chair of the HRVP and thus developing her own (EU) agenda. Nevertheless, by having the decisive word at the stage of the WGs the Spanish Presidency managed to ‘steer in preparatory documents, [and thus] Madrid was able to take over a more assertive role within the Council’s foreign affairs structure than future Presidencies’ (Bergmuller 2010: 9). A similar situation took place at the level of the PSC which was chaired by the Spanish Ambassador Carlos Fernandez-Arias Minuesa. The Spanish Ambassador performed his functions in very close cooperation and coordination with the HRVP and her cabinet thus ‘leading to a situation where the Ambassador [was] double-hatted as Spanish Ambassador and Ashton’s representative’ (Penalva 2010: 4). Such a working arrangement did not prove to be the most efficient as ‘the organisation and thematic preparation of the FAC meetings was not as thorough as was expected and especially, the agenda setting process happened to lack structure and continuity’ (Bergmuller 2010: 9). Nevertheless, the coordination and communication set at the bilateral

level ‘run smoothly and without any spectacular clashes’ (SGCb/05.2012, ESa/12.2010).

Apart from the transitional functions performed by the Spanish officials on behalf of the HRVP the Presidency managed to continue its pre-Lisbon scenario with reference to a more informal dimension of policy making. The Gymnich meeting⁴⁵ was held in Córdoba and co- chaired, along with the HRVP, by the Spanish FM. This gave the Presidency greater influence over the agenda of the meeting (ESb/12.2010); nevertheless the agenda to a large extent was determined by ‘the rolling issues and current events’ and thus ‘most of the issues entered the agenda by default’ (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). However ‘you could still feel the Spanish flavour to the final agenda’ (SGCa/05.2012). Consequently, the Presidency could continue to some extent with the pre-Lisbon functions which enabled Spain to play a more active role in European foreign policy making; this however shifted to a more informal dimension of policy making.

5.4.2 External and Internal Representation

Officially the function of representing the EU externally as well as of the Council internally was transferred to the portfolios of the HRVP and POTEK thus leaving no formal role for the Presidency. With reference to the EC, Herman van Rompuy quickly filled in his position and took over all of the responsibilities. Such an immediate and efficient implementation of the provisions by Herman van Rompuy left no role for the Spanish PM (ESa/12.2010). This had been discussed before the Presidency as Zapatero and Van Rompuy held two meetings during which they discussed the interpretation of the LT’s provisions and clarified bilateral expectations towards the role prescriptions of the POTEK and the Presidency (ESa/12.2010). The expression of the common understanding was demonstrated by publishing a joint article in the Guardian upon the inauguration of the Spanish Presidency.⁴⁶ It indicated a compromise by emphasising the promotion of the EU’s new institutional order ‘in a spirit of co-operation’ while at the same time acknowledging the joint commitment towards addressing ‘the priorities set out in the pro-

⁴⁵ Gymnich meetings are named after the castle in Germany where the first meeting was held during the German Presidency of the EU Council in 1974. They are informal meetings of FMs held twice per year in the pre-Presidency period usually in the country currently in the chair of the EU Presidency.

⁴⁶ As presidents of the EC and of the government of the rotating Presidency, we would like the application of the LT to be as diligent and rigorous as possible. In a spirit of co-operation, we will promote the EU new institutional order so we can address and resolve the problems that concern us all. Together we will address the priorities set out in the programme of the Presidency’ (The Guardian 03.01.2010)

gramme of the Presidency’ (The Guardian 03.01.2010). This was however quickly challenged by the organisation and management of the EU-US summit with the Spanish PM arguing that it should be hosted in Madrid. This was claimed to be caused by the PM looking for a spotlight and thus giving him a photo opportunity,⁴⁷ in order to improve his image on the domestic stage. Upon cancellation of the summit the POTEK's spokesman Dirk De Backer further undermined the EU's unity by claiming that the summit 'was prepared by the Spanish. The permanent Presidency has never been involved' (cited in Forelle 2010). The summit gained wide press coverage and became a symbol for turf wars surrounding the interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions (SGCa/05.2012, BEb/03.2011). More importantly, the US President's decision was interpreted as 'a snub' towards Spain (Tovar 2010 cited in Molina and Tovar 2011: 9), as 'the US President keeps travelling to Europe (...) without setting foot in Spain' (Ibid.).

In contrast to the POTEK, the implementation of the HRVP's role was less efficient and thus left more space for manoeuvring for the Spanish Presidency. The fact that the HRVP was without any administrative support and predominately preoccupied with creation of the EEAS acted as an enabling condition for the Spanish Presidency (SGCb/05.2012). In her double-hatted role of the HRVP and the Vice-President for the Commission it soon became obvious that the lack of any deputy would become a major issue undermining the development of the new system and implementation of her role (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). FM Moratinos deputised the HRVP on her request during some of the international meetings. These arrangements were informally agreed on and organised ad hoc in the course of the Presidency (SGCb/05.2012). The Spanish FM thus chaired some of the Association Councils: the EU-Egypt Association Council and the EU-Central Asia, and visited some of the countries, on behalf of the HRVP, namely the Balkan countries, South Caucasus and Mexico. Generally, Moratinos acted upon previous instructions; however the example of the already mentioned case of the EU arms embargo for China and the case of the Turkish membership perspective demonstrates how this deputisation was used to further national stances on these issues.

The highlight of the Spanish Presidency was supposed to be the hosting of quite few international summits: the EU-US, the EU-Latin America (May in Madrid), EU-Morocco (March in Granada), EU-Pakistan (April in Madrid), EU-Mexico (May in Santander) and EU-Egypt (June in Barcelona). The choice of these clearly reflects the tradi-

⁴⁷ This was quoted in an article in *El Confidencial* (online, 14.01.2010).

tional focus of Spanish foreign policy. The rather unclear cancellation surrounding the EU-US summit⁴⁸ only further strengthened the perception of the EU struggling with its new institutional system and emerging turf wars. It was generally perceived that the location of the summit in Madrid only emphasised the cacophony of the new European leadership.⁴⁹ A further two summits, the Union for the Mediterranean and the EU-Egypt summits were cancelled due to worsening Israeli-Arab relations. During the first half of 2010 there were other summits held at the EU level which were chaired and prepared by the POTEK and the rotating Presidency did not play any institutional role, for example the EU-Japan summit in Tokyo, the Nuclear Security Summit in US and the G20 meeting in Toronto. Thus, the selection of the international summits co-hosted by the Spanish administration reflected to a large extent Spanish original preference. The EU representation in international organisations depended on the particular policy area and involved all three actors: the POTEK, the Presidency and the Commission in various configurations, particularly with reference to the areas of mixed competences. This caused a rather confusing perception of the European leadership on the international stage as indicated by all of the interviewees.

The EU-Balkan summit was another event which was supposed to be the highlight of the Spanish Presidency. The summit was supposed to gather the most relevant international actors, including the US and Russia. Nevertheless, due to problems with the character of Kosovo’s representation the formula of the summit changed to ‘Gymnich character’, lowering the diplomatic rank of the meeting. The informal character of the ‘high level summit’ further increased the influence of the Spanish Presidency over the substance and management of the meeting (ESa/12.2010). The summit was officially chaired by Moratinos; there was no final declaration as to the particular character of the summit. The final statement was drafted by the Spanish team and presented by the Spanish FM. The press conference was chaired by the Spanish Presidency and was at-

⁴⁸ As commented by the White House on February 1st there were never any plans for the president to attend the summit. However, it was argued that the reason was the institutional confusion ‘setting too many phone numbers in place’ (ESa/12.2010) and ‘excessive summitry’ explained by the fact that the EU held too many summits without any real substance to them (Euractiv 02.02.2010). For more comments see Mock (2010).

⁴⁹ As cited by the Wall Street Journal (01.02.2010) one of the senior US officials commented: ‘We don’t even know if they’re going to have [a summit]. We’ve told them, ‘Figure it out and let us know’ (cited in EU Observer 01.02.2010).

tended by the Commissioner Füle. Moratinos portrayed the meeting as a success⁵⁰; nevertheless it was generally argued that the final statement lacked any relevant substance.⁵¹ The significance of the meeting was undermined by the modest number of heads of state and the fact the HRVP left the meeting immediately and was not present during the press conference (ESa/12.2010, ESc/12.2010).⁵²

Finally, the Spanish Presidency acted as the EU external representative through its framework of embassies and consulates.⁵³ Consequently, in comparison with the Spanish PM, Moratinos was more active in his capacity as the HRVP’s deputy than his national capacity as the FM of Spain. This can be explained by the institutional feedback stemming from the implementation of the HRVP’s role as well as the particular personality of the Spanish FM. He had been also considered as one of the candidates for the position of the HRVP due to his extensive European experience while acting as the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process (1996-2003). The particular interpretation and enactment of the HRVP’s role by Ashton enabled Moratinos to interpret his role in a wider capacity and thus play an active and visible role on the European stage. Consequently, the interpretation of the particular roles in the initial phase of implementation depended to a large extent on individual personalities in charge of these roles.

5.4.3 Neutral Brokering

The function of honest brokering, one of the most debated but firmly institutionalised expectations towards the pre-Lisbon Presidency, was to become a part of the expectations towards the role of the HRVP. However, with the transitional character of the Spanish Presidency and the fact that the Spanish officials were ‘acting on behalf of the HRVP’ the role of an honest broker would be still highly relevant. The performance of the Spanish Presidency in this area will be analysed using the example of the process of

⁵⁰ ‘Today in Sarajevo, I think the European Union and the Western Balkans decided to have a new deal. A deal of the future, a future of hope, a future of peace, a future of full integration in the EU’ (cited in EU Observer 02.06.2010).

⁵¹ As cited in Euractiv one of the senior Western diplomats commented: ‘There is no substance to any of it (...) It is just a feel-good event.’ (Euractiv 03.06.2010).

⁵² Some of the most relevant states, for example Germany, Russia and the US were represented at the level of deputies (Europolitics 02.06.2010). For the broadcast of the press conference see the website of the EU Council at <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/event/eu-western-balkans-high-level-meeting/press-conference-part-2-127>.

⁵³ It referred to 36 EU Delegations that were not ready to resume full responsibility for the EU representation function.

adopting the Council’s decision on establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service.

The EC’s conclusions adopted in December 2009 set a deadline for the Council’s decision on the establishment of EEAS to be adopted by the end of April 2010. It soon became apparent that formation of the EEAS would become a subject of ‘the usual European turf wars’.⁵⁴ The presentation of the proposal by the HRVP on March 4, 2010 during the COREPER meeting revealed substantial divergent preferences among Member States (EEASb/06.2012). As one of the officials commented even the choice of the venue in which the subject should be discussed became an issue: ‘there was *such excitement* about deciding where the EEAS should be discussed, with some countries *obsessed* with the GAC format and others preferring the FAC alternative’ (cited in Euractiv 22.03.2010). Bringing the EP into consultations revealed further differences of opinion with reference to the basic nature of the EEAS (EEASb/06.2012).⁵⁵ In order to facilitate a possible compromise the issue was put on the agenda of the Gymnich meeting on March 5, 2010 in Córdoba to enable ‘a more informal discussion’ (Ibid.).

The three main contentious issues were: the question of the HRVP’s deputisation and thus the EEAS’s institutional design, the staffing policy and the general nature of the EEAS – intergovernmental versus supranational. The EP set a separate group of three rapporteurs to deal with negotiations: Elmar Brok (EPP, DE), Roberto Gualtieri (S&D, IT) Bernhard Rapkay (S&D, DE) and Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, BE) (Euractiv 24.03.2010). Their main proposal was that three relevant Commissioners - Štefan Füle (enlargement and neighbourhood policy), Andris Piebalgs (development) and Kristalina Georgieva (humanitarian aid) - should be acting as the HRVP’s official deputies (Euractiv 24.03.2010). This was contrary to the design proposed by Ashton which set ‘the French-style post of secretary-general’ who ‘would run the EEAS *web like a spider*’ (cited in Euractiv 24.03.2010). The main argument was that ‘a civil servant, such as a secretary-general, cannot represent the EEAS vis-à-vis the Parliament’ (Euractiv 24.03.2010). Thus, another proposal was presented in the EP’s letter outlining a design of three deputies for the HRVP: the first one dealing with bilateral affairs, the second

⁵⁴ For example British and Swedish FMs David Miliband and Carl Bildt submitted a joint letter to the HRVP on March 3, 2010 warning about the consequences of such turf wars. For details see (Euractiv 05.03.2010).

⁵⁵ The EP was directly involved in setting up the EEAS as the co-decision procedure was required to adopt the EEAS’s budget.

with multilateral issues and the third dealing with crisis management. The second issue of the staffing policy referred to new Member States calling for ‘a geographical balance’ which would compensate for the underrepresentation thus far of these countries in the EU institutions; the latter proposal was rejected by old members (Euractiv 22.03.2010).

Therefore, upon official presentation of the draft of the Council decision by the HRVP on March 25, 2010⁵⁶ the EP issued a statement criticising in particular the issue of deputisation, as the position of ‘the secretary-general and deputy secretary-generals does not provide the politically legitimised deputies that the High Rep needs in order to do her job properly’ (Euractiv 26.03.2010). Additionally, it was pointed out that the proposed structure would result in the Commission services and the EEAS working in parallel instead of enabling for a full merger (Ibid.). This was further emphasized in a letter from April 21, 2010 by Joseph Daul, Martin Schulz and Guy Verhofstadt arguing that ‘the current structure does not reflect the Community interest or promote a genuine European added value, but rather the return of intergovernmentalism’ (cited in Kovacheva 2010). The HRVP presented its revised proposal on April 23, 2010, which was adopted by the Council decision three days later. This preliminary agreement stated that this would ‘provide a basis for consulting the EP’ (CEU 2010b). The official negotiations, held in the framework of a quadrilogue comprising the EP, CEU, Commission, and the HRVP, were finally concluded during a meeting organised by the Spanish Presidency held in Madrid on June 22, 2010. One of the results was the sealing of the agreement on reinforcing the scrutiny of the Parliament over the CFSP and EU external action, which opened a way for securing the final compromise (EEASb/06.2012).

The process of adoption of the Council decision on the EEAS reflected traditional inter-institutional rivalry; as described in the FIIA paper: ‘in the post-Lisbon debate on the EEAS, the Commission has attempted to ensure its control over EU foreign policy, while the EP has demanded greater democratic oversight and defended the ‘Community method’ of decision-making. The Council has been torn between the imperative of creating a functioning service and the instinct to safeguard national prerogative’ (Behr et al. 2010: 2). Nevertheless, the attempts of the Spanish Presidency to secure a compromise demonstrate ‘the Presidency effect’ which tends to strengthen determination of the country in the chair to report some tangible results of its efforts. In the case of Spain it

⁵⁶ For the details on the proposal see (CEU 2010b).

was its determination to ensure the compromise among the European institutions. Consequently, ‘the final agreement was a result of week-long negotiations and good will of all actors involved, but to some extent was brokered by Spaniards’ (EEASb/06.2012).

5.4.4 Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership

The final part in this section aims to examine the Spanish Presidency’s performance with reference to the function of agenda shaping and political leadership. One of the Spanish priorities was the enlargement policy and in particular the Turkish membership perspective (ESa/12.2010). The eventual accession of Turkey to the EU constitutes one of the key national interests and thus was also to be kept high on the Presidency’s agenda (ESa/12.2010). In February 2010 the Presidency organised a high-level Spanish-Turkish meeting. As argued by Deniz Bulut Ture, such a ‘comprehensive meeting with a large group of ministers is a sign of the determination to push cooperation to the next level and utilize these strong ties in Turkey’s accession talks with Europe’ (cited in Zeynalov 2010). By organising a high-level visit of the Turkish PM in Spain, a few days before the Gymnich summit Spanish officials were trying to foster agreement on allowing Turkey to take part in the summit.⁵⁷ Including the latter issue on the Gymnich agenda further demonstrates the influence of the Spanish Presidency; nevertheless, the overall management of the Gymnich meeting was done by the HRVP (ESa/12.2010). Nevertheless, as argued by Colomina *et al.* Spain failed to advance any common positions with Turkey on Iran or Gaza (2010: 4); thus clearly demonstrating the limits with reference to the bilateral Spain-Turkey relations.

The assessment of the influence of the Spanish Presidency could be also done by benchmarking the performance against expected outcomes, one of which was the re-launching of the EU-Cuba relations on the principle of delinking the questions of human rights from the broader political dialogue. Such an approach has been generally met with resistance from the EP which adopted a resolution in 2007 setting the condition for normalisation of relations with Cuba on the principle of human rights and the progress of democratisation. Thus any progress on this matter would not only depend on finding a common position among EU countries, but most of all with the MEPs. Nevertheless, Spanish efforts towards changing the EU position failed as the ‘non-decision over Cuba’

⁵⁷ FM Ahmet Davutoğlu was expected to attend the working dinner with FMs of other candidate countries on March 6 in Cordoba, Spain, where the EU FMs convene in an informal half-yearly meeting (Caspian Weekly 08.03.2010).

demonstrated the Member States' preference for maintaining the thus far held approach towards the EU-Cuba relations and made further cooperation conditional on ensuring greater political liberalisation (Bermudez 2011 cited in Molina and Tovar 2011, Colomina et al. 2010: 9). Among the original plans was also a plan to establish a Palestine state in 2010 (EU Observer 21.12.2009); however it was decided not to introduce this on the European agenda due to the divergent stance of the Member States (ESc/12.2010).

The modest progress was recorded with reference to reinvigorating the EU policy towards the Mediterranean under the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean. During the Spanish Presidency, two years after the official launch of the initiative by the French Presidency, Ahmed Jalaf Masade (Jordan) was agreed on as the first secretary and the statute for the SG was adopted (Fernández Sola and Sorrozza Blanco 2010). However, the significance of this development was undermined by the fact that he lasted only 10 months in this office (Molina and Tovar 2011: 10). Further achievements included the first EU-Morocco summit. One of the tangible results was the establishment of a joint parliamentary commission with the aim of facilitating agreement on the bilateral national indicative programme 2011-2013. The final declaration was delivered by the POTECE, but it was fully prepared under the leadership of the Spanish team (ESc/12.2010).

The Latin America summit held on May 18, 2010 in Madrid was overshadowed by controversies over the representation of Honduras (Bello cited in Euractiv 2010); however it still brought substantial outcomes, such as advancing the Association Agreement's chapters on trade, political dialogue and cooperation. The summit was concluded by signing a new Action Plan underlining the importance of sustainable development and social cohesion in the region. This was reflected in the establishment of the Latin American Investment Fund with the initial budget of 125 million euro (Malamud 2010). Moreover, as a result of the Spanish efforts the EU and Mercosur decided to resume negotiations on the Association Agreement (ESc/12.2010).⁵⁸ Finally, it was acknowledged that the Spanish team managed to finish negotiations and subsequently signed the Association Agreements with Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it has been argued that efforts towards creating the Central American Free Trade Zone are

⁵⁸ The negotiations EU-Mercosur started in June 1999 but since then were largely stopped due to divergences of views in the field of agricultural products, intellectual property and asymmetries.

⁵⁹ For further details see Domonkos 2010.

driven by the American countries rather than the EU (Colomina et al. 2010: 4). One of the most substantial outcomes of the summit was its contribution to the civil society dimension by establishing the Euro-Latin American Assembly and the Euro-Latin American Foundation (Ibid.). Therefore, the particular transitional character of the Spanish Presidency was also reflected in its considerable influence on European foreign policy in the first half of 2010, which significantly reflected Spain’s original preferences.

5.5 Role Assessment

As argued by Colomina et al. 'the best conclusion of any assessment of the external action of the last Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2010 is that no assessment is possible' (2010: 1). Even though 'Spain managed to keep for itself some of the limelight in several foreign policy matters that were deemed crucial' (Colomina et al. 2010: 3), it was also criticised 'for continuing to occupy spaces that, in the new order, pertain to the permanent institutions' (Ibid.: 5). The role assessment of the Spanish Presidency was to a large extent undermined by its transitional character. Thus most of the interviewees noted that due to the particular context Spain should not be assessed on the basis of the Lisbon criteria. The subject of external relations became the main focus during the final discussion on the performance of the Spanish Presidency in the EP, revealing some ambiguous expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency. During this final appearance the Spanish Presidency’s efforts were acknowledged by Presidents of both the EP and the Commission. However, some of the MEPs were less favourable to the Spanish particular role preference. As highlighted by MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit the scenario pursued by the Spanish Presidency revealed 'a real problem of dysfunctionality' and he argued that the Lisbon Treaty failed to design functional arrangements for co-existence of the rotating and permanent Presidencies.⁶⁰ Furthermore, MEP Francisco Sosa Wagner argued that it was necessary to make a ‘distinction between its political management on the one hand, and the work that has been carried out by the workers in the engine rooms, on the other’. As he further explained ‘it is the first of these that has failed, and that is due to a lack of adequate impetus from the Presidency of the Government, which has fashioned a European Presidency in accordance with the swing of the pendulum’ (Ibid.) One of the Polish MEPs Pawel Kowal noted lack of progress in the subject of the

⁶⁰ For the record of the debate see the website of the EP at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20100706+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

EaP by stating that ‘We cannot accept a situation in which the European Union’s objectives depend on which country currently holds the Presidency. If it is a Presidency from a Member State in the south, it works on objectives related to the south, and if it is from the east, it works on different objectives’ (Ibid.). Thus, clearly various MEPs held various visions for the Presidency’s role post-Lisbon.

The latter assessment was also reflected to some extent by the interviewees who noted that the role of the Presidency might be still relevant in the neighbourhood policy. This could be done by managing the dossiers on trade, and thus in more general EU foreign policy. Therefore, the ENP might be one of the areas in which the Presidency could exercise some political leadership; nevertheless this would have to be done in coordination with and under overall management of the HRVP (ESc/12.2010). As stated above, the assessment of the Spanish Presidency was to a large extent marginalised by its transitional character. However, some preliminary indications with reference to the Presidency’s role started to emerge. This would refer most of all to exercising functional support for the newly established actors and ensuring their fullest operational capacity in the shortest time possible. Thus, the Presidency would also bear responsibility for the coherence and effectiveness of the new system. This might result in ensuring the role for the Presidency in foreign affairs for the subsequent Presidencies.

Presidency’s Functions	Role expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency	Role expectations towards the Spanish Presidency	Role preference held by the Spanish Presidency
Organisational Management	Moderate	High	High
Neutral Brokering	Moderate	High	Moderate
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	Moderate	High
External and Internal Representation	Low	High	High

Table 3 The Overview of the Role Expectations and Role Preference of the Spanish Presidency (Author’s Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

5.6 Role Institutionalisation under the Spanish Leadership – Towards the Role Prescription

The previous analysis of the formal provisions demonstrated the lack of a clear role prescription of the Presidency's role in EU foreign affairs. This has been further demonstrated by the example of the Spanish Presidency. The limited provisions set ambiguous expectations of more permanent management over EU foreign policy at the supranational level while maintaining its intergovernmental features and thus ensuring the special role for Member States. Therefore, a more detailed role specification and thus particular expectations would have to emerge during the course of the formal implementation. As demonstrated by the case study of the Spanish Presidency this would emerge in the form of informal practices and working arrangements among various actors involved in the post-Lisbon system.

The Spanish Presidency enables for analysis of the institutionalisation of the Presidency's role in the immediate aftermath of the formal implementation. The role preference of the Spanish Presidency indicated a rather ambiguous stance emphasising in declaratory terms the new institutional context limiting the role for the Presidency, while in practical terms taking advantage of the transitional character to pursue an active foreign policy-making with particular focus on nationally important priorities. Therefore, the rhetorical support for the implementation of the new system was contradicted by presenting an ambitious agenda in terms of the European foreign policy. This was also enabled by the institutional feedback of the emerging system. It further empowered the Spanish Presidency by enabling it to exercise a supportive function towards the HRVP in her role. The Spanish Presidency thus performed the traditional pre-Lisbon functions of administrative management, external and internal representation, neutral brokering and even more sensitive role of an agenda shaper. The analysis of the Spanish role preference demonstrated how the six-month term in office is used to pursue traditional national interests which can be traced to Spanish national role conception in European and foreign policies. Additionally, it can be also argued that Spain was facing some contradictory expectations: on the one hand towards the post-Lisbon Presidency's role, on the other hand towards the role of Spain in EU foreign policy based on the traditional Spanish preferences and previous behaviour as illustrated in table 3.

The role of the HRVP and the lack of a fully operational system left more space for the rotating Presidency. Thus, Spain fulfilled the functions associated with the Presidency

in the pre-Lisbon period, namely chairmanship of the Council WGs, as well as the PSC and the FAC (on request by the HRVP), representation and brokering. However, while exercising these functions Spanish officials felt that they were in a double-hatted position representing the HRVP rather than Spain. The deputisation of the HRVP, emerging as one of the ‘unexpected consequences’ created a ‘window of opportunity’ for the Spanish Presidency. The latter demonstrated the Presidency’s role institutionalisation as a result of the institutional feedback. This was in turn used by Spain to pursue some of its national priorities thus expanding the role of the post-Lisbon Presidency to exercise the function of the policy entrepreneurship. The deputisation of the HRVP enabled the Spanish team to access formal powers, such as agenda control, information access and procedural management, which had been available for the Presidency in the pre-Lisbon context. In addition, the Presidency maintained its functions in the more informal settings of European foreign policy making, like the Gymnich meetings, thus setting a new practice. Further clarifications were brought into emerging features for the post-Lisbon Presidency: the informal character of working arrangements with the new actors, a new role for the HRVP’s deputy and the growing significance of providing coordination between various levels of the European policy making system. Thus, the function of the Presidency demonstrated to some extent path dependency, with Spain taking over some of the roles associated with the pre-Lisbon Presidency. Consequently, the period of the Spanish chairmanship of the Council was characterised by both deliberate role making and the institutional feedback of the emerging the post-Lisbon system.

The application of the role theory approach proved particularly useful in exploring the Spanish Presidency as an interactive and constitutive process of individual role making and the expectations emerging from the institutional feedback of the emerging system. In terms of the leadership capacity of the Spanish Presidency this was mostly visible in terms of clarifying the new role for the Presidency. As observed by Penalva the Spanish Presidency was the last of the pre-Lisbon Presidencies (2010: 5). Therefore, the role making of the Spanish Presidency was limited to a large extent by its transitional character. The uniqueness of the Spanish period in the office makes its experience less relevant for the subsequent Presidencies. Additionally, both the role preference and the subsequent role enactment were affected by the particular context at the domestic, European and international level. These two levels both empowered and constrained the Spanish Presidency. Thus, the deteriorating economic and financial situation of Spain deteri-

orated the perception of the Spanish role on the European stage. This was particularly visible with the reconstruction of the government structures undertaken between April and June 2010 with the main aim of reducing spending (Molina and Tovar 2011: 13). The contingent factors emerging at the international level: the worsening of Arab-Israeli relations, directly affected the ability of the Spanish team to deliver meaningful results within European foreign policy making.

The rather mixed assessment was caused by the high expectations set by the Spanish government itself. As argued by Molina ‘rather than opt for a moderate approach as to what could be expected from this six month period, [Spain] chose to raise expectations by stressing the historic importance that the challenge held for Spain and for Europe’ (2010). As stated by the President of the European Commission during the final debate in the EP ‘Spain has set an example. I am sure that Belgium, once it assumes the rotating Presidency of the Council, will continue to take the same approach, or even step up this approach, knowing, as we do, Belgium’s great European tradition’. Therefore, the expectations towards the subsequent Presidency held by Belgium were based on the performance of the Spanish Presidency.

Chapter VI Belgium in the Chair of the EU Council (July – December 2010): ‘Moving to the Back Seat’

The unclear expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency’s role allowed the Spanish Presidency considerable leeway in their interpretation and role making. This was used as an opportunity to pursue a mixture of the pre-Lisbon Presidency, by taking a spotlight on the European stage and promotion of national priorities, and the post-Lisbon Presidency, by aiming to support the performance of the new actors – the POTEK and the HRVP. The final result was a rather confused perception of the multi-actor leadership at the international stage and the surfacing turf wars at the European level. The Spanish Presidency brought some clarifications with reference to expectations of both European actors and Member States; however its impact on the post-Lisbon role and inter-institutional position of the Presidency was to a large extent limited by the particular transitional context.

This chapter continues with the empirical analysis examining the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2010 as applied in the previous chapter, starting with an examination of the role preference and its sources, namely national role conceptions and informal expectations. The second part of the chapter focuses on the performance of the Belgian Presidency and the final section undertakes its assessment and evaluates Belgium’s influence on the role institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency's role.

6.1 National Role Conception – Belgian Foreign and European Policies

Belgium is one of the founding countries of the European Community as well as one of the countries most experienced in chairing the Council Presidency. Its small size and federalist features triggered development of a consensus-oriented approach towards its politics and policy making system. This was further fostered by Belgium’s lengthy membership in the European Community (and the EU) and its successful exercise of the greatest number of the Council’s Presidencies. As a small Member State with only limited important national interests Belgium prioritised functions of honest brokering and driving the European agenda forward, rather than pursuing particular national agenda setting. Nevertheless, during the previous times in the office, as further analysis will demonstrate, Belgium still managed to promote some of the national interests, as well as its particular federalist preferences towards the European project. Thus, the national role

conception and the particular nature of Belgian policy making might have had significant influence on its behaviour while in the chair of the 2010 Presidency.

Being one of the founding states Belgium continues to record a high percentage of support for the EU membership, with the 2009 Eurobarometer indicating 66% support (Standard Eurobarometer 73). The particular character of policy making at the national level constitutes an important factor for the Belgian role conceptions with reference to both European and foreign policies. As a federalist country the Belgian domestic decision process incorporates both regional and national levels of decision making; the complex structure is also reflected in the substance of Belgian foreign policy (Crieckemans 2010). The strategy of transferring some of the policy areas to the European level is also seen as a mechanism for ‘coping with tensions rising from the perceived diverging interests and policies of the constituent communities’ (Coolsaet and Soetendorp 2001: 131). This is further reflected in the particular consensus style of policy making at the national and European levels. As observed by Coolsaet and Soetendorp ‘(...) Belgian foreign policy makers still try to convince their partners to accept their views on certain foreign policy issues during the political decision-making process leading to a common position. But once agreement on a common position has been reached (...) [the government] will adopt it as (...) [its] national position’ (2001: 130). The experience of the consensus and inclusive decision making system at the national level indirectly affected Belgium’s capacity at the European level. The extensive attempts to ensure consensus and compromise derive from the domestic political culture and are results of its diverse society, in religious, linguistic and cultural terms. Thus, many politicians prioritise the de-escalation of conflict over problem solving. This is further reflected in the individual style of politicians and diplomats, ‘[p]olitical leadership and statesmanship do not come naturally in Belgium’ (Houben 2005 cited in Petrova 2007: 7), but ‘what Belgian diplomats see themselves as best at is the art of reaching compromise’ (De Gucht 2006 cited in Petrova 2007: 7) As further noted by Willame ‘Belgian foreign policy is one of followership (...) marked by the lack of integrative political figures’ (1999 cited in Petrova 2007: 7). Consequently, it can be argued that the core of the Belgian national role conception is its default drive for achieving consensus and its compromise-oriented multilevel decision making system; thus its performance at the European level favours pursuit and development of common interests over particular national ones.

Furthermore, as argued by Petrova, 'Belgian strong support for European integration, lack of assertiveness internationally and predilection for pursuing policies within the European framework have been variously attributed to its historical legacies, smallness, and weak national identity' (2011: 8). For Belgium, from the beginning the European integration was associated with Belgian economic development, securing a better position at the international stage and increasing its influence through a collective approach. As argued by de Schoutheete, 'Europe has become a point of identification in a country where national self-consciousness and identity are rather weak and seem to restrain bold independent initiatives internationally' (1992 cited in Petrova 2007: 8). Thus, European integration seems to be the main focus of the Belgian national identity and its main goal is to ensure further advancement of the European project with the long-term aim of establishing a federal union (ESb/12.2010). This has been done by subsequent attempts to expand the supranationalist features of the EU decision making process as well as favouring expansion of the areas of integration (Franck et al. 1999). The main strategy for Belgium's membership has been dominated by the attempts to ensure balance between big and small Member States (ESb/12.2010). Thus, the main aim has been to ensure 'means of levelling the playing field' by 'reducing the power and influence of the great Member States over the smaller' (Coolsaet and Soetendorp 2001: 131). Consequently, Belgium has been one of the few supporters of the introduction of qualified majority voting in the Council in the area of EU foreign affairs as it has seen it as a manner of reducing the voting power of large Member States (Coolsaet and Soetendorp 2001: 132). Belgium, among other small countries, was also one of the key supporters of maintaining the rotating system for the Council Presidency, seen as the main mechanism of providing the EU with institutional balance and equality among big and small Member States (ESb/12.2010, see also Bunse 2009).

As a small state with only limited national interests, Belgium's role conception reflects to a large extent the European perspective with reference to most of the international affairs and with only limited focus on key issues of national importance. As argued by Coolsaet and Soetendorp the foreign and security policy has never been regarded as a high priority for Belgium (2001: 134). One of the few national priority areas linked to the colonialist traditions is the issue of Africa, with conflict management and peace building in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) being one of the key examples demonstrating Belgium's agenda setting at the European stage. The particular focus on

ensuring sustained security-related management of the interventions in this region was the focus of the 2001 Belgian Presidency (Kelly 2007-2008: 60). With the limited financial and political resources of a small state Belgium tends to take advantage of European policy making to secure additional resources and thus increase the overall effectiveness of its individual national policy towards Africa (Coolsaet and Soetendorp 2001: 138). Finally, with reference to most of the foreign issues on which Belgium had not elaborated any particular positions, the EU framework offers a possibility for expansion of national positions without the requirement of applying extensive national resources (Ibid.).

The traditional consensus approach has been also reflected in the particular role preferences towards its Council Presidencies as Belgium has been usually associated with the role of neutral broker rather than political leader (research interviews). The most recent Belgian Presidency in 2001 centred on the institutional reform with the highlight event being formulation of the Laeken Declaration setting the Belgian vision for the enlarged Union and the timetable for the debate on the future of the EU (Kerremans and Drieskens 2003: 155). As noted by authors the 2001 Presidency was characterised by 'procedural ambitions' referring to 'achieving a positive effect on the likelihood of reaching agreement, especially on difficult and highly politicized issues, irrespective of the substance of such agreements' (Kerremans and Drieskens 2003: 157). This further highlights the role of the mediator in brokering compromises among Member States and emphasising the development of the European agenda. Nevertheless, in the area of foreign affairs the Belgian government aimed to pursue agenda setting by putting the issues of Africa high on the European agenda (Kerremans and Drieskens 2003: 159).⁶¹ The national focus was reflected in the number of high-level international meetings, for example the Euro-African summit in Brussels in October 2001⁶². The Belgian government also used its Presidency as an opportunity to put the issues on the agenda of the EC summit in Laeken (Kerremans and Drieskens 2003: 160). One of the key achievements was influencing the Commission stance on the 'Programme Indicatif National' which was supposed to facilitate EU development assistance to this region (Ibid.). Fi-

⁶¹ This particular interest was traced to the PM Verhofstadt's previous activities as a member of the parliamentary commission dealing with Rwanda in 1996 (Kerremans and Drieskens 2003: 159-160). Additionally the region of Africa had been also of special attention to FM Louis Michel (Kerremans and Drieskens 2003: 160).

⁶² There were also high-level visits of the EU Presidency to Burundi, Rwanda, Congo and Zimbabwe in November 2001.

nally, Belgium was praised for the role it played during the 'World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance' in Durban (South Africa). The Belgian team acted as both a broker and a political leader, and thus strengthened the image of the EU on the global stage (Ibid.).

Consequently, Belgium's membership strategy can be summarised as a small Member State with limited national interests in foreign affairs clearly favouring further integration at the European level, seen as a mean of balancing interests between big and small Member States. The latter has been also demonstrated by political leadership exercised towards further integration. Its national role conception demonstrates a high level of stability across subsequent governments and has been influenced by its domestic experience of a consensus and compromise-seeking decision making system. This has been widely demonstrated by Belgian policy making at the European level as well as in the case of its previous Presidencies. Therefore, even when exercising political leadership this was rather targeted at achieving common European goals rather than particular national ones. The latter emphasis on the neutrality of the Presidency's role and national federalist preferences towards the further development of the EU project might to a large extent influence individual expectations held towards Belgium and its 2010 Presidency.

6.2 Expectations Towards the Belgian Presidencies

Since no new formal agreements were adopted in order to clarify the ambiguous role of the Presidency and its position within the new institutional set up this section will focus on the informal expectations held by European and national actors.

The six-month term of the Spanish Presidency demonstrated a high level of ambiguity with reference to the division of labour under the new provisions. Nonetheless, the new working arrangements were to emerge in the form of informal practices and rules rather than new formal provisions (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). Thus, the framework of the institutional expectations remained limited in its scope, allowing the Presidency's role to develop informally. This might indicate that the post-Lisbon Presidency would continue with its pre-Lisbon 'path dependency' through informal role expansion. The Spanish Presidency, even if limited in its impact on the new institutional architecture due to its transitional character, managed to have a direct impact on the expectations towards the Belgian Presidency and the post-Lisbon scenario in general. It was expected

that due to its characteristic of the ‘small Member State’, extensive previous Presidency experience and its overall successful performance while in the chair, ‘the Belgians would be doing a much better job at not stepping on anybody’s toes’ (SGCa/05.2012). This would indicate that Spain’s active performance was not considered as ‘appropriate behaviour’ in the post-Lisbon context.

As argued before, small Member States have been usually perceived as more successful in exercising the Presidency’s functions, focusing rather on the European agenda and favouring the cooperative approach involving all of the actors. With a rather limited number of national interests the small states’ Presidencies do not aim for the spotlight and an extensive national agenda. Thus, they are usually perceived as genuine ‘honest brokers’ working in the interests of all Member States (research interviews). Nonetheless, even such an experienced country as Belgium was not certain what was expected of its Presidency in 2010. As one of the Belgian officials stated ‘this time we do not quite know what it means to have the Presidency’ (cited in Bunse et al. 2011: 55). In addition to this, the domestic situation with a caretaker government taking over after the inconclusive parliamentary elections further lowered expectations towards the Belgian Presidency in terms of exercising any kind of leadership. However, due to the particular design of multilevel governance this lack of government was not expected to hinder overall Belgian performance on the European stage (BEa/03.2011, BEb/03.2011). This latter will be further elaborated in the subsequent section.

The 2010 Presidency would be Belgium’s 12th time in the office, making it one of the most experienced countries in the EU. Its previous Presidency, held in 2001, became associated with the particularly successful leadership in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks which proved that Belgium can be successful not only in managing the legislative work of the Council but also in crisis management and reacting to unexpected events. Consequently, as summarised by Van Hecke and Bursens, Belgium enjoyed ‘a rather strong reputation of running a successful Presidency’ (2011: 17).

Expectations towards the Belgian Presidency were built on the basis of its role conceptions as a small Member State favouring a more federalist vision for the EU and thus more supranationalist policy-making method for the European foreign policy making. Thus, it was generally expected that, in contrast to the Spanish one, the Belgian Presi-

dency might be the first post-Lisbon Presidency limited in political and functional terms.

Pre-Presidency’s Functions	The Rotating Presidency	The High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission	The President of the EC
Organisational Management	Moderate	High	Moderate
Neutral Brokering	Moderate	High	Moderate
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	High	High
External and Internal Representation	Low	High	High

Table 4 The Overview of Expectations Towards the Post-Lisbon Functions Second Half of 2010 (Author’s Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

6.3 Towards the Role Preference of the Belgian Presidency

The Presidency’s programme set specific plans for the six-month period of the second half of 2010. It reflected the Trio Presidency programme in both the general structure and the substance of its strategic framework. The operational programme presents more concrete tasks to be completed based on the current European agenda and the rolling issues left by the Spanish Presidency. Prioritising the Presidency Trio’s programme served as another indication that the Belgian Presidency’s aim was to fully implement the Lisbon Treaty’s provisions and limit its role to following the already established European agenda rather than focusing on national priorities.

6.3.1 'Europe in Action!' - Official Programme of the Belgian Presidency

The official programme of the Belgian Presidency introduced briefly the challenges facing the EU at that time, focusing on the ongoing economic crisis. It also emphasised the new institutional architecture and its potential contribution to the EU system as ‘these new institutions should allow us to lend new impetus to European development’ (Bel-

gian Presidency 2010: 4). Therefore, the main working method for the Belgian Presidency would be ‘through collective action and by establishing intensive dialogue with institutions and Member States’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 4). The final section referred to ‘external relations’ and aimed ‘to consolidate the European Union's role as a force for global peace and security’ (Belgian Presidency 2010). In order to achieve this, the programme prioritised creation of the EEAS. With reference to EU external representation ‘the Belgian Presidency wants to optimise the potential of the new treaty and place emphasis on uniqueness of representation’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 9). Secondly, the Presidency’s plans highlighted the continuation of the enlargement process, the opening of markets by focusing on the work of Doha Development Round and concluding the free trade agreements with South Korea. Thirdly, a particular focus was placed on the promotion of human rights. Fourthly and finally, during the six-month period ‘The Heads of State or Government of the European Union will meet their Asian and African counterparts at two summits [with] the aim of strengthening cooperation and partnership with these continents and to address global challenges together’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 9). Thus, the final priority firmly pointed to Africa and Asia as regions of particular interest. Nevertheless, these issues were emerging from the EU working agenda rather than from the national one.

The operational programme further highlighted the implementation of the LT: ‘The Belgian Presidency will continue the work carried out under previous presidencies to implement the Treaty of Lisbon (...) and will ensure, by working together directly with all individuals involved, that working methods and the sharing of responsibilities are consolidated and stabilised in full compliance with the Treaty of Lisbon.’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 11). This would be primarily done by ‘supporting the High Representative so that the European External Action Service can be effectively created and fully operational as soon as possible’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 11). Therefore, ‘the recruitment of personnel to the Service at all levels, and the progressive transformation of the European Union’s delegations are priority tasks’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 47). Ensuring operational capacity of the EEAS was seen as a necessary condition for ending the transitional period.

The Belgian Presidency emphasises the LT as ‘a true turning point in the organisation of the Union’s external relations (...) as it will strengthen the coherence of our Union's actions and its influence around the world’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 46). The Presi-

dency acknowledged functions of the new actors, the POTEK and the HRVP and recognised their central role in the new system of policy making. Nevertheless, ‘in this transition period, in keeping with its European commitment, Belgium will do everything within its power, including the making available of personnel, to ensure the smooth application of the new measures introduced by the Treaty in support of the President of the EC and the High Representative’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 47). Furthermore, ‘with regard to the Common commercial policy, coordination within the Foreign Affairs Council will continue to be provided by the rotating Presidency’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 47) and ‘the Presidency will work towards the effective implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon in terms of common trade policy, particularly concerning the new relationship which must be built with the EP’ (Belgian Presidency 2010: 49). This demonstrated the aim of exercising administrative and functional support as the Presidency's main function post-Lisbon, and thus highlighting the inter-institutional coordination of the complex system of EU external relations as a key task for Belgium. The fact that the issues referring to EU foreign policy, except for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and swift creation of EEAS, were presented in the final part of the programme demonstrates further the perception held by the Belgian Presidency that this area should not be featured high on the Presidency's agenda. Hosting of the EU- Africa summit would be the closest representation of national priorities of Belgium (ESb/12.2010). Otherwise the programme lacked any of the nationally important subjects. This would further demonstrate the aim of the full implementation of the new system, rupturing with the practices thus far and removing the Presidency from any of the spotlight and leadership opportunity.

6.3.2 Role Preference – the Domestic, European and International Context

The thus far strong reputation of Belgium's exercise of the Presidency became challenged in 2010 by a particular domestic political context. The sudden resignation of PM Yves Leterme in April 2010, caused by the inability to reach an agreement over Brussels' electoral borders between French- and Dutch-speaking parties, forced the collapse of the Belgian government (Euractiv 27.04.2010). Belgium thus found itself preparing for early elections only few months away from stepping into the chairmanship of the EU Council. The elections held on June 13, 2010 left the country divided with the New Flemish Alliance winning in the northern, Dutch-speaking part of the country, and the Social Party winning in French-speaking Wallonia. The victory of the Flemish party

with its separatist tendencies was an indication of the willingness of the Northern part of the country to give more powers over the EU affairs to regional governments (ESb/12.2010). The earliest the new government was expected to be formed was September (Euractiv 01.07.2010); thus it was possible that the new government with new officials would have to take over control of the European issues and the daily management of the EU Council’s management halfway through the Presidency. The opinion that this might lead to problems with ensuring continuity of Belgian performance was widely reflected in the international press coverage.⁶³ The fact that the Flemish party did not have any previous diplomatic experience was identified as a factor potentially hindering the performance of the Presidency (Drieskens 2011: 92). In the aftermath of the 2007 elections negotiations between parties lasted seven months; thus, Belgium might have found itself without a new government not only during the launch of the Presidency, but even during the whole six-month period.⁶⁴ The latter was admitted by both the caretaker PM Leterme and the rest of the government officials (Euractiv 27.05.2010). At the same time their efforts focused on ensuring that this would not have any substantial impact on the performance of the Belgian team.

Due to the complex system of governance spread across federal and regional governments the substantial part of the Presidency agenda would be under the exclusive jurisdiction of regional governments. This formula was already tested during the 2001 Presidency (Drieskens 2011: 92). This on the one hand would allow Belgium to maintain its performance as the chair of the EU Council despite not having a new fully functional government in place; on the other hand, some ‘problems may surface with regard to effective coordination of multi-level inputs and shared responsibilities between regions and the partially enabled federal government’ (Bello 2010). However, due to the traditional Belgian cooperative approach already at the stage of the preparation of the Presidency’s programme the main focus was to ensure the most inclusive approach, involving in the discussion as many political parties as possible. This was to ensure a general agreement on Belgium’s strategy and national political support for the Presidency (ESb/12.2010). As pointed out by Secretary of State for European Affairs Olivier Chastel during one of the pre-Presidency interviews: ‘In Belgium, approving a Pres-

⁶³ For example see Financial Times 23.04.2010 and New York Times 13.06.2010.

⁶⁴ In October 2010, after more than 3 months, the negotiations collapsed over the issues of redefining electoral boundaries around Brussels and on the future financing of social and healthcare systems in Wallonia (Euractiv 29.06.2010).

idency programme is almost like approving a national policy programme’ (Euractiv 02.06.2010) therefore indicating the extensive framework of multi-level negotiations enabling the achievement of general consensus at the national level. Finally, the lack of a full-time federal government was even portrayed as a possible advantage; as explained by PM Leterme during the presentation of the Belgian programme in the EP on July 7, 2010: ‘(...) one of the advantages of the current political situation in my country is that we can devote almost all our time to the EU rotating Presidency’ (Leterme 2010).

Following the example of the Spanish Presidency, Belgium stressed that the implementation of the LT would be its primary priority. This would mean that with reference to foreign affairs ‘you will not hear my views on foreign policy’ as declared by FM Vanackere (Willis 2010). The declared lack of willingness to use its Presidency as an opportunity for agenda shaping was argued to be mostly due to the lack of strong national priorities. As noted by Van Hecke and Bursens ‘a fierce defence of national interests presumes a clear definition of these interests; Belgian politicians will be mainly dealing with domestic issues, there won’t be much time left to define those interests’ (2010). Nonetheless, Belgium still saw its time in the office as a chance to project its particular vision for the post-Lisbon EU foreign relations. As noted by Belgium’s EU ambassador Jean De Ruyt during one of the events on the Belgian Presidency at the European Policy Centre in Brussels: ‘We [the EU] have ... to redefine our role in the world, in the new world with emerging powers and the new polarity’(EU Observer 11.06.2010). This was to be facilitated by the new institutional innovations introduced by the LT. As Ambassador De Ruyt explained, the goal was to bring to conclusion the transitional phase opened by the Spanish Presidency and ‘stabilise the new institutions’ by the end of the year (Sampol 2010). He also pointed out the growing role of the EP in adopting international agreements. This was expected to appear on the agenda of the Belgian Presidency as the ‘Framework Agreement’, adopted between the Commission and the EP confirming the growing powers of the EP in adopting international agreements. However, it was met with some objections from Member States (EPc/05.2012, EPd/05.2012). Thus, Belgium was ready to mediate between Member States and the EP and the Commission (Ibid.).

Nonetheless, Belgium was thus aiming to use its Presidency to actively pursue its vision for European integration and in particular its method of working. Some indications on the latter can be found in the presentation given by Foreign Affairs Minister Karel de

Gucht during an opening of a diplomatic conference in Brussels in 2009. He pointed out that the Presidency would be used to re-establish the EU institutional balance as increasingly the EU became ‘governed by *an executive board of big countries*’ (Euractiv 21.04.2009). Thus, the aim would be to ‘restore the proper functioning of the EU institutions (...) in which the utmost respect of the Community method occupies a primary position’ (Ibid.). This was further emphasised during a press conference with Leterme held on June 25, 2010 as he confirmed the primary role of the Belgian Presidency as an honest broker and thus aiming for ‘concrete progress in moving closer to Europe by all countries involved’ (cited in Van Hecke and Bursens 2011: 33).

As argued above, the Belgian Presidency aimed to end the transitional period in European politics and ‘set good precedents, manage to execute the full potential of the LT and create something lasting’ as stated by a Belgian official (cited in Bunse et al. 2011: 54-55). State Secretary for European Affairs Chastel stated that the Belgian Presidency ‘will mark a *rupture* – or break – from current practice following the entry into force of the LT in December’ (Euractiv 27.04.2010). Thus, the Belgian team was aiming to set a new scenario for the role of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making. The latter would mean that the Member State in the chair would step down from the European spotlight, focusing rather on exercising a supportive role towards the new actors, the POTE and HRVP. As Secretary Chastel stated ‘both [Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton] will have full responsibility for their entire field of competence’ (Ibid.). This did not mean that the Belgian Presidency would be missing all together from the EU foreign affairs, rather, as stated by Chastel, Belgium would ‘not step aside but will implement the LT, all the LT and nothing but the LT’ (Ibid.). This meant that Belgian MFA and its diplomatic corps would be at the HRVP’s disposal and as he emphasised, the Presidency would focus on doing ‘everything the HRVP considers the rotating Presidency should do. And not the opposite, not on an equal footing’ (Ibid.). Therefore, Belgium left the practical application of its Presidency’s role preference to be decided by both the POTE and the HRVP and thus allowing them to decide what should be the functions of the post-Lisbon Presidency and its position within the new institutional architecture. Nonetheless, as suggested by Bello (2010) this could ‘also be read as making virtue out of necessity, suggesting an unusual willingness to surrender presidential prerogatives to EU bureaucracy in order to deflect attention away from internal Belgian complications’.

This ‘supporting and back seat approach’ was reflected by intensive coordinative efforts held regularly with the cabinets of the HRVP and POTEK in the pre-Presidency period and later during the Presidency itself. The former was to clarify any confusion in the division of labour as surfacing in the example of the Spanish Presidency (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012, EPd/05.2012). Thus, the issue of hosting international summits, one of the most contentious issues on the Spanish agenda, was to be decided in advance (ESc/12.2010). The pre-Lisbon practice did not provide any ultimate solution as EU summits held with its international partners used to be organised either in Brussels, or in the capital of the country in the chair of the Presidency, or finally in the capital of the partner country. Belgium agreed on new arrangements which stipulated that all bilateral summits with non-EU countries would be held either in Brussels or in the partner countries’ capitals (SGCa/05.2012). Furthermore, multilateral summits would be held in Brussels; in case of the Belgian Presidency it was the EU-ASEM summit to be held in October 2010 (Ibid.). It was decided that the latter would be hosted by the Belgian Presidency as it had been preparing for the summit for over two years (Ibid.). Moreover, it was agreed that the practice established by the Spanish Presidency of hosting the Gymnich meetings by the Member State in the chair of the Presidency should be continued (Ibid.). This was seen as ‘a gesture of goodwill’ towards accommodating the Presidency’s input without formally undermining the new system (SGCb/05.2012). Nevertheless, as confirmed by Belgian officials all of the EU foreign policy statements would be made exclusively by the HRVP, not by the Presidency (Ibid.).

In conclusion, the role preference of the Belgian Presidency envisaged that its actual performance would be conditioned by the performance of the POTEK and the HRVP. This might suggest that the political leadership of the Belgian Presidency might be located not in the pursuit of concrete priorities, but rather in actively shaping the new institutional system and setting a lasting scenario for the post-Lisbon functional Presidency. However, with the post-Lisbon system only starting to take shape the expectations towards the Belgian Presidency were still shaped to a large extent by its transitional character. Therefore, these expectations would have to adjust to account for insufficiencies of the emerging system and would require the Member State in the chair to play a more active role through deputisation and supporting the HRVP in her supranationalist functions. The first months of the HRVP’s time in the office demonstrated her inability

to exercise political leadership in EU foreign affairs thus creating a vacuum at the European level, yet Belgium was not expected to fill this in; rather to encourage the HRVP to play a more active role (ESa/12.2010). This further indicated the transitional character of the Belgian Presidency which might affect its enactment of the original role preference as well as its ability to shape the post-Lisbon system.

6.4 The Belgian Presidency in Office – Role Enactment

The subsequent part of the chapter will focus on the period of role enactment of the Belgian Presidency while in the chair of the EU Council. The analysis will take into account previously identified factors both enabling and constraining the Member State’s performance while in the chair as well as the particular context of the Belgian Presidency. The subsequent part of the chapter will be structured according to the pre-Lisbon functions of organisational management, external and internal representation, honest broker and political leadership.

6.4.1 Organisational Management

First of all, Belgium had to continue with the practice established by Spain and took over chairmanship of the Political and Security Committee and the Council's WGs in the absence of the EEAS. As already indicated with reference to the Spanish Presidency the chairmanship was implemented on ‘behalf of the HRVP’ thus limiting the possible agenda setting and management to following instructions as supplied by the HRVP and her cabinet. The management of the WGs were perceived as not very efficient, mostly due to the limited capabilities of the HRVP’s office to supply agendas of the meetings and draft documents well in advance. Thus, Spain decided to use this as an opportunity to pursue its own agenda whenever it was possible. The Belgian Presidency, facing the same dilemma, decided not to overstep its prerogatives and rather limit its individual initiative. This led to further ‘mismanagement’ of foreign affairs as perceived by Member States (SGCa/05.2012, POTEK/04.2012, EPd/05.2012; Vogel 2012). The FAC meetings as well as some of the WGs lacked proper preparations and it was difficult to agree on conclusions as the Belgian chair did not have enough detailed instructions on the original objectives of the HRVP (Ibid.). This was seen as a result of HRVP’s strategy of micromanagement which left her unable to cope with the various issues on the FAC agenda (SGCa/05.2012, POTEK/04.2012, EPd/05.2012; Vogel 2012). As already demonstrated by the Spanish Presidency, acting on behalf of the HRVP left the Presi-

dency with no national representation during meetings. Nonetheless, in the case of Belgium it further strengthened its original preference of prioritising honest brokering among Member States’ preferences over ensuring political leadership.

The perceived ‘mismanagement’ of the FAC put pressure on the Belgian Presidency and created a demand on Belgium’s role as a mediator between the Member States and the HRVP (ESa/12.2010). The latter development could be seen as an informal expansion of the Presidency’s role of internal representation within the European institutional architecture. Following the adoption of the Council decision on establishing EEAS in October 2010 the HRVP moved to appoint her permanent chairs, starting with PSC in November 2010 (EU 2010a) and following with the rest of the WGs in December 2010 (EU 2010b)⁶⁵; thus leaving it up to the Hungarian Presidency to work out practical arrangements among the EEAS and the Presidency with reference to chairmanship and management of the Council’s WGs.

6.4.2 External and Internal Representation

As presented in the previous chapter the external representation of the Council was taken over by the POTEK and the HRVP. Nonetheless, as argued before, the issue of who should chair and where to host international summits had been to a large extent decided in the pre-Presidency period. Thus, the Belgian Presidency acted as a host to two international summits: the EU-ASEM and the EU-Africa. In comparison with the Spanish Presidency this constitutes a visible reduction in the number of international summits chaired by the Presidency. This was also perceived as an indication that this function would be gradually taken over by the POTEK and the HRVP (ESb/12.2010). Nevertheless, the example of the Belgian Presidency still demonstrated a particular national preference with reference to the region of Africa.

The 8th EU-ASEM summit was held in Brussels in October 2010 was supposed to be the highlight of the Belgian Presidency as its biggest international event with 46 heads of state and government coming to Brussels. As argued by Drieskens et al. it was ‘the first opportunity for the post-Lisbon EU to present itself to its Asian partners in a high-level context’ (2012: 213). The original role preference of the Belgian Presidency to play a secondary role to both the POTEK and the President of the Commission as the

⁶⁵ Chairmanship for the WGs COEST (Eastern Europe and Central Asia), CONOP (non-proliferation) and Nicolaidis (PSC preparation) were to be announced in January 2011.

official representatives of the EU fell through, as the expectations of the Asian leaders were to deal with the individual Member States rather than the EU (Ibid.).⁶⁶ As explained by Telo (2011) ‘On several occasions the Asian partners of ASEM have reacted with bewilderment to the proposal of the Belgian Presidency to attribute a central role to President Van Rompuy on the occasion of the official opening of the conference.’ He presented the perception of the Asian states which argued that ‘ASEM is a forum of states and not a meeting of the regional organisations of Europe and Asia, that is to say a forum where states meet and participate as individual entities’ (Ibid.). The Belgian team managed to convince the Asian representatives ‘on terms of the exceptional case’ to allow the summit to be hosted by the POTEK. As argued by Telo ‘perhaps the nationality of President van Rompuy also played a positive role’ (Ibid.). However on the international stage the European leadership framework was still perceived as ‘over-confusing’ (SGCa/05.2012).

The Belgian chairmanship of the EU representation to the EU-Africa summit was a result of the Belgium team taking over the representation of the EU in Libya in the absence of EU Delegations in this country (ESb/12.2010). Since the summit was hosted by Libya, Belgian officials emerged as the EU representative rather by default than by a strategic decision. Nonetheless, as stressed by Renier Nijskens, Director of the Africa Desk at Federal Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the summit ‘was co-chaired by EC President Van Rompuy [as] in the context of preparing the summit, Belgium acted under the authority and at the service of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton’ (Europafrika 2011). Thus, the Belgian teams both in Tripoli and in Brussels were responsible for organisation of the preparatory meetings (Drieskens et al. 2011: 212). As further noted by the authors ‘the Belgian team (...) had to explain the post-Lisbon reality to its Libyan counterparts, who were still assuming that Belgian PM would speak on behalf of the EU’ (Ibid.). Furthermore, Belgium’s successful performance at the summit became undermined due to the contentious issue of ‘the possible participation of Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, who was indicted by the International Criminal Court’ (Ibid.). The EU countries threatened to withdraw their participation in the case of the Sudanese President’s appearance. The Belgian team

⁶⁶ The perception of the united EU representation was also hindered by the fact that the invitations to the summit were co-signed by the Belgian PM, the presence of Belgian national flag and the presence of the Belgian PM during the press conference (Drieskens, Debaere, De Ridder and Nasra 2010: 213).

proposed a compromise by supporting the Libya’s bid for the seat at the UN Human Rights Council (2011-2013) in exchange for withdrawing the invitation for the Sudanese President (Ibid.). The Belgian team took part in drafting texts of the Tripoli Joint Declaration and the 2011–2013 Action Plan. However none of these documents managed to bring any substantial changes to the relations. Consequently, the Belgian Presidency had a limited impact on the substance of the meeting agenda and failed to translate its ambitions towards the meeting due to the general lack of support from the African and EU countries (Ibid.).

The remaining summits: Brazil (Enterprise Conference on 14 July), South Africa (28 September), China (6 October), South Korea (6 October), Ukraine (22 November), Russia (7 December) and most importantly the postponed summit (24 November) demonstrated the fully applied post-Lisbon model of EU representation comprising of the POTE and the President of the Commission, and the HRVP on particular occasions. The Belgian Presidency did not play any direct role with reference to these summits, thus creating rather ambiguous expectations that the Presidency can still play a more active role with reference to preferred policy areas (SGCb/05.2012, ESc/12.2010, BEb/03.2011).

The consolidation of the post-Lisbon EU external representation was supposed to be reflected in the attempts to secure a right of participation for the POTE in the UN General Debate. This request was met with scepticism at the UN level on the grounds that other regional organisations might become marginalized in their relations with the UN (Wec 2011). The Belgian Presidency proved to be quite active in this matter by looking for a possible compromise. One was proposed in the form of a revised draft of the original resolution prepared by Member States including additional provisions 'granting other regional organisations demonstrating advanced patterns of integration the same rights' (ESa/12.2010). However, during the General Assembly held on September 14, 2010 the resolution was not even put to the vote due to the high level of di-

vergent opinions⁶⁷. As a form of protest the EU distributed statements instead of taking the floor.⁶⁸

With reference to the internal representation of the Council this was also managed by the HRVP; nonetheless the Belgian Presidency continued the practice established by Spain of filling in ‘on behalf of the HRVP’ during the briefings and meetings with the EP (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). Additionally, the Presidency had to step in to further increase coordination between various configurations of WGs to ensure sufficient horizontal and vertical coherence of EU affairs. However this continued in a rather informal capacity without any formal institutionalisation (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012, EPd/05.2012).

The continuation of the practice which had emerged under the Spanish Presidency of filling in for the EU representation in countries without EU Delegations became an institutionalised rule under the Council decisions adopted on January 19, 2010 for the first half of 2010 (CEU 2010c) and on June 30, 2010 for the second half of 2010 (CEU 2010d). Other than the case of the Belgian representation in Libya this did not result in enhancing the political capacity of the Presidency as the Belgians were prioritising securing of the EU common interests rather than the national ones (FR/05.2012). Both external and internal representation as performed by Belgium in the second half of 2010 illustrated its attempts to perform a minimalist Presidency. However, challenged by the institutional feedback, it had to perform a more active role. This, however, became an opportunity for illustrating how such an active performance might be done in support of the new system.

6.4.3 Neutral Brokering

Following the example of the Spanish Presidency the performance of the Belgian Presidency in its role of honest broker will be analysed using the example of the process of the EEAS's formation.

⁶⁷ During this meeting the Caribbean Community prepared a motion formally asking for an adjournment of the debate. This was read as a general lack of support from other representatives (Drieskens et al. 2011: 211).

⁶⁸ For more details on this issue see United Nations General Assembly, ‘Participation of the European Union in the work of the United Nations’ (A/64/L.67), New York, 31.08. 2010 and ‘EU Contribution-United Nations 65th General Assembly: General Debate’, New York, 29.09.2010.

As outlined in the previous chapter the Spanish team managed to make a breakthrough during the inter-institutional negotiations between the HRVP, the Commission and the EP in June 2010. This enabled the EP to approve the draft of the revised Council’s decision as negotiated by the Spanish Presidency on July 8, 2010. Following agreement on the revised version at the GAC meeting on July 26 the decision was transferred into the hands of the European Commission which expressed its agreement on the same day. Nevertheless, the formulation of the EEAS could not have been implemented without two further regulations: the staff and financial regulation and the EEAS’s budget (ESa/12.2010). As argued by Drieskens et al. this is where the Belgian Presidency’s input was much appreciated. The particular Belgian context of multilevel governance and thus extensive experience in complex negotiations made it one of the most appropriate brokers on the complex issue of negotiations on staffing with reference to quota and flexibility (2010: 210). The negotiations were concluded with the adoption of the Staff and Financial Regulation on October 20, 2010 by the EP (Euractiv 21.10.2010) and by the Council on November 18, 2010 thus leading to official creation of the EEAS on December 1, 2010. Belgium thus continued the practice established by Spain of ensuring brokering and coordination among various actors involved in the complex post-Lisbon system in the process of formation of the EEAS.

6.4.4 Policy entrepreneurship/political leadership

The Belgian Presidency was definitely the first one that should not be judged according to advancement of national priorities in its role enactment since only few of the priorities were listed in its agenda. Nonetheless, one of the most concrete results would be the conclusion of the EU-South Korea free trade agreement signed in the margins of the October EU-SAEM summit held in Brussels. The agreement was ‘the most ambitious ever concluded by the union’ resulting in the creation of approx. 19 billion euros of new exports for EU producers (Euractiv 17.09.2010). Its adoption was presented by the Belgian FM during a press conference stressing that ‘this is the first generation of bilateral trade agreements which will bind Europe and Asia together in an ever-closer economic bond (...) and a very big step in opening markets in Asia for our companies’ (Ibid.). The Belgian Presidency was the key broker which managed to secure Italian support for the agreement by proposing ‘a compromise to delay by six months the introduction of an agreement that Rome fears could hurt its car industry’ (Ibid.). Thus, as noted before,

the area of trade remained one of the policy areas in which the Presidency could continue to play a more active role.

The subsequent area of the role enactment will focus on the inter-institutional relations, in particular with reference to the POTECH and the HRVP. The relations with the POTECH were to a large extent facilitated by the fact that Van Rompuy was a former Belgian President, thus he already enjoyed close relations with Belgian officials and politicians and could rely on an extensive network of personal connections (ESb/12.2010). Following the informal practice set by the Spanish Presidency regular contacts were established between the cabinets of the POTECH and the HRVP and the Belgian Presidency (SGCa/05.2012). In the case of the POTECH, this enabled extensive coordination, but the rotating Presidency did not have much influence on the substance of the conclusions of the EC meetings (SGCa/05.2012). The Belgian Presidency brought to an end the informal practice established by the Spanish Presidency, but not favourably perceived by the European actors (ESb/12.2010), that a head of state of the Member State in the chair joined the POTECH for the post-EC press conferences. Only the last one, concluding the six-month period of the chairmanship, was to be attended by the Belgian Presidency (Bunse et al. 2011: 56).

The cooperation with the HRVP and her cabinet was not perceived to be as smooth. The practice of coordination meetings was established early on; nevertheless they did not provide sufficient input from the HRVP with reference to meeting agendas and documents (ESb/12.2010). As pointed out by Vanhoonacker, Pomorska and Maurer, additional bi-weekly coordination meetings were organised from March 2010 onwards amongst high-level representatives of the MFA/REPER and the HRVP’s cabinet; subsequently ‘the role of this task force was to set the foreign policy agenda under the leadership of the HRVP’ (2011: 71). Nevertheless without proper and timely outputs the agenda of the Council's bodies and WGs were prepared only a few days in advance and documents were not distributed on time. This reinforced the negative perception of the HRVP’s management style. One of the interviewees indicated that the HRVP was trying to foster a rather Community-style policy-making taking advantage of her previous Commission experience (GB/05.2012). Most of the Member States did not find this an appropriate method for foreign policy making post-Lisbon (Ibid.).

In addition to this, the HRVP asked to be deputised sometimes only a week or even a few days in advance, which proved to make it difficult for Belgium to manage any medium-term planning (ESb/12.2010, ESc/12.2010). As pointed out by one of interviewees ‘the cooperation with Ashton and her team was strained’ and ‘the biggest challenge was the limited access to the HRVP’ (Vannhonacker, Pomorska, Maurer 2011: 71). A few months after finishing its Presidency the Belgian FM admitted during a press interview that the performance of the HRVP Ashton was ‘characterised by silence on important foreign policy issues, (...) little long-term strategy and poor management of her agenda (Willis 2011). He also noted his disappointment with reference to the EEAS and its lack of significant analytical output on the debate about the EU relationship with strategic partners. He further stated that ‘the analysis prepared by the staff of Ashton was rather disappointing. It was an inventory of what people who watch the world already know: China is important, emerging market, be careful’ (Willis 2011). Yet the Belgian Presidency did not step in, leaving it up to the HRVP to manage and organise foreign affairs of the EU, further demonstrating the limits of the post-Lisbon Presidency.

6.5 Role Assessment

Overall, the assessment of the Belgian Presidency undertaken by the European officials focused on its pursuit of supportive and administrative functions. As explained by Vanackere ‘the Belgian Presidency intentionally chose *not to partake* in issuing declarations and political statements, but instead focused on its role as a facilitator’ (Brand 2010). As indicated by one of the interviewees Belgium set the precedent for the post-Lisbon ‘invisible’ Presidency (FR/05.2012). This was further emphasised by a Belgian official: ‘The PM is no longer in the driving seat, but for the technical Councils he is now more involved. Both our PM and FM are now requesting much greater discipline from their cabinet’ (cited in Bunse et al. 2011: 56). The chairmanship of some of the WGs and most of the Council's bodies such as COREPER II and the GAC affected the position of the Presidency and thus ensured its active role in external relations (ESb/12.2010). As further observed by the authors ‘Leterme worked behind-the-scenes rather than in the limelight to ensure effective high-level coordination work with the president of the EP, President of the Commission and the President of the EC’ (Bunse et al. 2011: 60). Therefore, the Belgian experience contributed to the further institutionalisation of the Presidency's role which expanded further towards supporting the perfor-

mance of the new actors and the post-Lisbon complex system through coordinating functions.

One of the priorities of the Belgian Presidency was to establish ‘a point of no return’ so the subsequent Member States could not revert to the previous model of the ‘pre-Lisbon Presidency’. The impact of Belgium's role making was further strengthened by the general positive assessment. The overall performance was regarded as successful and in the spirit of the LT by all of the European actors, the Presidents of the European Commission, EP and the EC, thus meeting the expectations set for Belgium. As pointed out by Lété (2010) ‘Belgium may have truly been the first country to lead an EU Presidency in post-Lisbon style’.

It is difficult to assess the capacity for influence of the Belgian Presidency since from the very onset of the Presidency the Belgian team was stressing its commitment to the new actors and their powers. Among the new EEAS appointments presented on September 15 Belgium received two positions: Heads of Delegation in Senegal and Burundi. However, it was generally expected that after securing such a high ranking position as the position of the President of the EC Belgium would not be a front runner in terms of the EEAS senior appointments (Bunse et al. 2011: 210). No political leadership of the Belgian Presidency was recorded with reference to nationally important priorities, for example the Congo. The latter was mentioned by the FRIDE analyst Bello as he pointed out that ‘in the DR Congo (DRC)/Great Lakes of Africa region (...) Belgium's historic ties (...) are particularly suited to providing European leadership and input at a time when the DRC's post-transition arrangement faces its sternest test to date’ (Euractiv 24.06.2010). He further argued that Belgium could ‘create much needed leeway for EU crisis and peace-building interventions with measurable impacts’ (Ibid). However, the role preference of the Belgian Presidency did not provide any space for exercising influence over nationally important areas of EU external relations. The characteristics of agenda shaping in the area of European foreign policy started to adjust to the post-Lisbon reality and become more top-down as a result of the strategic leadership supplied by the POTEK. In September 2010 the latter organised a special session of the EC on the subject of the EU foreign relations (EU Observer, 11.06.2010). Thus as concluded by Bunse et al. ‘[The Presidency] looks more like a service provider to the EC or middle manager now, than a source of political leadership’ (2011: 60). Therefore, Belgium brought further clarifications into the role of the Presidency: it should continue in

its capacity to provide supportive and functional administrative function rather than a political institution associated with agenda setting. Yet, some of the interviewees indicated that even though this should be the post-Lisbon role prescription for the Presidency, some of the Member States, in particular the big ones and with strong national priorities in foreign policy, might want to restore the scenario for a more politically charged Presidency aiming for political entrepreneurship. Consequently, the impact of the minimalist scenario as pursued by Belgium might be challenged by some of the Member States on the grounds that Belgium did not have a permanent and functioning government at that time (GB/05.2012, FR/05.2012). Nevertheless, it seems that Belgium also demonstrated that through actions such as ‘supporting and back seat Presidency’ some degree of political leadership and influence on the European agenda might still be exercised.

Presidency’s functions	Role expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency	Role expectations towards the Belgian Presidency	Role preference
Organisational Management	Moderate	High	High
Neutral Brokering	Moderate	High	High
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	Lack	Lack
External and Internal Representation	Low	High	High

Table 5 The Overview of Role Expectations and Role Preference of the Belgian Presidency (Author’s Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

6.6 Role Institutionalisation under the Belgian Leadership – Towards Role Prescription

With only limited informal clarifications brought by the Spanish Presidency and no further institutional expectations Belgium continued to have more leeway for its individual role preference. To a large extent this role preference was built on the assessment of the

Spanish Presidency, which was generally perceived as the last pre-Lisbon rather than the first post-Lisbon Presidency. Therefore, Belgium wanted to discontinue the experience up to this point and establish a precedent for the new post-Lisbon Presidency. Thus, the Belgian team aimed for a limited involvement in foreign affairs, leaving the management for the European actors. This was however challenged at the structural level as the HRVP was not capable of performing the role on her own. Eventually influenced by the emerging expectations at the institutional level Belgium had to play a more active role than it had originally planned. As in the case of the Spanish Presidency the emerging system empowered Belgium to pursue some of the functions traditionally associated with the pre-Lisbon Presidency. The analysis of the role preference and the subsequent role enactment clearly demonstrated the impact of the national role conception in European and foreign policy. The traditional consensus and compromise-seeking style of policy making enabled the Presidency to be positioned as the main supporter for the HRVP in her administrative, representation and brokering functions. The only function Belgium decided not to perform was the one of agenda setter and political leader, clearly demonstrating its traditional preference for supranationalist policy-making also in the area of EU foreign affairs.

In the past, following the historical institutionalist argument of ‘unexpected consequences’, the role expansion of the Presidency was a result of the changing relative power of the other European actors, in particular the Commission. In the multi-actor environment of the EU the functions of one actor depends on how other actors interpret and perform their functions. The findings of the chapter further confirm this argument that the performance of the Presidency depends on the performance on the other actors, in particular the POTEK and the HRVP. The role enactment of the Belgian Presidency depended on the performance of Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton in the chair of their functions. The efficient performance of Van Rompuy facilitated the aim of the Belgian Presidency of performing its minimalist approach. While reference to the HRVP ‘the back seat’ approach was undermined by the perceived inefficient performance of Catherine Ashton in her role, characterised by excessive micromanagement and lack of sufficient political leadership. Therefore, the general underperformance in foreign affairs was noticeable. The Belgian Presidency did not step in to provide political leadership but rather maintained its supportive, functional role preference through increasingly acting as a ‘broker’ between the HRVP and Member States. The Belgian

Presidency became one of the contact points for other Member States thus further strengthening its functions of neutral brokering.

The supportive stance towards the POTEK resulted in its increasing exercise of political leadership in foreign affairs as demonstrated by the example of the EC thematic meeting in September 2010. At that time the agenda setting started to become more top-down and exercised by the European actors. The function of the Presidency became more technical by translating strategic political decisions into Council decisions through their formulation in the Council preparatory bodies. Thus, as observed by Bekke (2011) there was a 'shift from a political to an administrative leadership of the Presidency'. The function of the Belgian Presidency shifted inwards (Drieskens et al. 2011: 209), focusing on internal representation and coordination between various Council configurations (primarily the FAC and WGs). This role was summarised by Deputy PM Vanackere during his last press conference on December 20, 2010 by comparing the Presidency to a car: thus the Presidency is '(...) not an additional wheel of the car but a mechanism to coordinate the smooth running of the four existing wheels of a car' (cited in Van de Voorde 2012: 5).

The case study of the Belgian Presidency further demonstrated the constituted process of the institutionalisation of the Presidency's role as a result of particular role making, which was further challenged by the way the institutional feedback with the developing system required a greater role than originally envisaged by the Belgian team. Nonetheless, it was also recognised that due to the particular circumstances of Belgium being a small country and having a caretaker government, the applicability of this model will be rather limited with reference to big Member States and members with strong national interests in European foreign policy (SGCb/05.2012). The long-term impact on the institutional set up was also limited due to the transitional character of the Belgian Presidency, namely the lack of a fully-fledged EEAS. As observed by Taylor (2011) 'Belgium has provided one answer to the Lisbon treaty's ambiguities, but it is not the only one possible'. Therefore, the subsequent Presidency – led by Hungary – was supposed to bring some new clarification of the function and position of the rotating Presidency under the full-time EEAE's chairmanship of the PSC and most of the Council WGs on foreign affairs and the fledgling EU diplomatic service.

**Chapter VII Hungary in the Chair of the EU Council (January – June 2011):
'Between the Domestic and European Presidencies'**

The Belgian Presidency aimed at introducing 'a point of no return' for the post-Lisbon Presidency's role in external affairs by setting a precedent of a supporting and functional Presidency, and thus enabling the full development of the capacities of the new actors. Nevertheless, without the fully developed institutional system, namely the operational EEAS, the HRVP was still not capable of performing all of the functions on her own. Thus the original role preference of the Belgian Presidency was challenged by the institutional feedback creating further informal expectations towards its role. Thus Belgium played an active role on the European stage by supporting the HRVP through exercising tasks of organisational management, internal and external representation and to some extent neutral brokering. The functions of agenda setter and political leadership still not having been fully addressed at the European level resulted in a political vacuum and 'mismanagement of foreign affairs' (SGCa/05.2012); however Belgium deliberately decided not to address these issues. As demonstrated by Belgium's term in the office, the role of the Presidency depends both on a nationally envisaged role preference and institutional feedback which might either empower or constrain the Member State in its pursuit of the original strategy. The latter might also have an impact on the informal expectations which might change in the course of the term in the office, thus requiring the Member State to adjust its strategy and subsequent behaviour, as was the case with both Spain and Belgium. As noted before, the Hungarian Presidency would be the first post-Lisbon Presidency operating alongside a 'more or less' fully operational EEAS, and thus it would bring further clarifications towards the post-Lisbon institutional dynamics.

This chapter continues with the empirical analysis examining the Hungarian Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2011 by applying the analytical framework of the role institutionalisation as outlined in figure 6.

7.1 National Role Conceptions – Hungarian Foreign and European Policies

Both Hungary and Poland belong to the group of the Central and Eastern European countries that regained their independence in 1989 after almost fifty years of Soviet dominance. They were also among the 2004 'big bang enlargement' that expanded the EU from 15 members in 2003 to 25 in 2004, and moved the EU external border further towards Eastern Europe. Their processes of transformation and modernisation, both in

economic and political terms, became quickly associated with European integration as the accession process set numerous conditions for candidate countries. The first years of the EU membership were still characterised as an ongoing adaptation process, learning how to behave in a new decision making environment, as well as the first attempts to project national preferences onto the European agenda. Therefore, both Hungary and Poland preparing for their first Council Presidencies were conceptualising them as the traditional 'membership test' to demonstrate understanding and skilfulness in European affairs (research interviews). However, in case of Hungary the Presidency would be also an opportunity to pursue a renewed conception of a more assertive and multidimensional foreign policy as envisaged by PM Orbán. The shifting role conception in foreign and European policies might be particularly relevant in explaining the original role preference and subsequent behaviour while in the chair of the Presidency.

Since the democratic transition in the early 1990s Hungarian foreign policy demonstrated a high level of continuity among various governments and was traditionally centred on three issues: the North-Atlantic and European orientations, the focus on regional cooperation, and a policy of supporting ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries (Varga 2000). The first aspect was directly affected by Soviet dominance of this region of Europe. As pointed out by Ágh 'in the early 1990s, there was euphoria in Central and Eastern Europe, usually accompanied by the slogan 'Return to Europe' which promised a short and painless Europeanization process' (1999: 847). Thus, references to Europeanization or Westernization emerged as the most important legitimization mechanisms for Hungarian governments and their transformation efforts (Ágh 1999: 841). This would also refer to modernization of foreign policy, as it was in the case of Spain.

Secondly, the particular focus on the regional policy has been influenced by the location of Hungary which 'is situated midway between the West and the East' thus, its central position makes it a 'ferry county' and enables it to become a 'regional hub' (Varga 2000: 120). This position was to be achieved through membership in regional organisations (Ibid.). One of the first and by far the most successful initiatives was a project of 'The Visegrád Three' launched in 1991 by Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia with the main aim of supporting each other in their European accession. Later it developed into a more extensive cooperation in the framework of the 'Visegrád Group' which became a platform for coordinating national stances at the European level with reference to vari-

ous areas.⁶⁹ Finally, the migration policy was referring to the complex issue of the status of Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries (Varga 2000: 118). This issue was also among the first ones to be focused on the European stage through initiatives aimed at establishing a protection monitoring system for minorities in Europe (Varga 2000: 121). Consequently, these three themes have constituted a core of the emerging Hungarian national role conception. It has remained stable across subsequent governments, however under the leadership of Orbán Hungary has adopted a much more assertive approach towards its national interests (HUa/07.2011).

This was already the case the first time Orbán took over the leadership of the country in 1998. The change of government at that time did not bring significant changes in foreign policy strategy as Orbán's administration (1998-2002) continued with its focus on the EU membership, however the EU was increasingly seen as an opportunity of securing national interests on the regional and international stages (HUa/07.2011). As cited in the governmental strategy on foreign affairs 'the main question of accession to the Union is whether we will succeed (...) in building a country capable of using the possibilities of the Union, or whether we allow ourselves to be pushed to the margins of Europe' (MFA HU 1998). As further emphasised 'the aim of the negotiations carried on with the EU is, by now, to make sure that the assertion of our economic interests becomes the focus (...) It is a legitimate expectation that the Hungarian government should represent the national interests in a consistent and resolute manner' (Ibid.).

Upon joining the EU in 2004, these three main foundations of the Hungarian national role conceptions had direct impact on its membership strategy as well as its priorities within the European foreign policy. One of the examples is the ENP launched in 2004, originally designed by the EU as the answer to the biggest EU enlargement ever and the shifting of its borders to the East. For the Hungarian administration the ENP from the beginning served as a framework for addressing the issue of Hungarian minorities in this region (HUa/07.2011, MFA HU 2008: 9).

⁶⁹ Further analysis of the Visegrád cooperation can be found for example Dangerfield, M. (2009) 'The Contribution of the Visegrád Group to the European Union's 'Eastern' Policy: Rhetoric or Reality?', *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 61 Issue 10; Dangerfield, M. (2008) 'The Visegrád Group in the Expanded European Union: From Preaccession to Postaccession Cooperation', *East European Politics & Societies* Summer Vo. 22 no. 3; Fawn, R. (2001) 'The elusive defined? Visegrád co-operation as the contemporary contours of central Europe', *Geopolitics* Vol.6, Issue 1.

Another particular focus of Hungarian foreign policy making within the EU has been centred on the enlargement policy in the region of the Western Balkans and the Eastern dimension of the ENP. However, this has been rather limited to reflect particular national interests concerning Russia and Ukraine (HUa/07.2011). Thus, for Hungary the term 'neighbourhood' has been rather confined to referring to the Western Balkans and Ukraine (Racz 2011). In the 2002 'National Security Strategy' Ukraine and Russia were identified as the priority areas in the post-Soviet space (MFA HU 2002). With reference to the region of the Western Balkans its importance is due to economic factors as 'more than fifty percent of Hungary's foreign direct investments (3 billion euros) are directed at the Balkans' (MFA HU 'Hungary in the World'). It shows that stabilization of this region constitutes one of the key goals for the further development of the Hungarian economy.

Following a landslide victory of the Fidesz party in 2010 parliament elections Viktor Orbán became a PM for the second time. Fidesz's nationalist and conservative ideology was expected to transform not only domestic, but also foreign policy of the new government (HUa/07.2011). Nevertheless, it seemed that the traditional approach would continue as the new strategy published in 2011 identified key objectives as developing bilateral relations with neighbours and maintaining the policy towards Hungarian minorities (MFA HU 2011). The emphasis on regional cooperation was further strengthened with Orbán's first foreign visit being to Poland.⁷⁰ This was also combined with attempts to further foster the position of Hungary in Europe; one of the strategies was to reinforce the role of Central Europe through advancing the influence of the Visegrád Group. Fidesz aimed to establish it as the main consulting and coordinating framework in the region with reference to key issues, such as the approaching talks on the EU budget and energy policy. However, this approach was undermined to a large extent by the 'government's ethnic understanding of national identity, expressed in the controversial law concerning Hungarian minorities abroad, which has badly affected relations with neighbouring countries', particularly with Slovakia (Leconte 2012: 138). The increasing assertiveness and emphasis on pursuit of national interests has created a rather unfavourable cooperation environment for the Hungarian government. This attitude was also reflected in the Eurobarometer's results, as Hungary remains one of the most neu-

⁷⁰ As highlighted by Leconte, usually Hungarian prime ministers' first trips were to Brussels, or Paris and Berlin, in order 'to signal their 'western orientation' (2012: 138). Thus, Orbán's decision was supposed to send a clear message of the importance of the strategic partnership to the region.

tral countries in which the positive and negative opinion towards the EU membership are usually recorded at the same level.⁷¹

The new administration argued that the 8-year period of central-left governments had been characterized by a reactive foreign policy with no substantial involvement at the regional and European levels (HUa/07.2011). The new approach thus aimed for a more active and multidimensional approach, also aiming for rapprochement with Russia and thus addressing the issue of the decreasing US focus on Central Europe (Ibid.). Compared to the previous term in the office, the image of the government became more influenced by a firm and controversial stance on Hungarian minorities.⁷² Furthermore, the government continued with the support for the Western Balkans' accession process. The FM's first official visit was to Sarajevo to attend a regional Balkan conference followed by Belgrade where he announced the intention to facilitate Serbia's accession to the European Union during the Hungarian Presidency (HUa/07.2011).

Additionally, during the annual meeting with ambassadors in Budapest in August 2010, on the eve of the Hungarian Presidency, Orbán announced his aim of pursuing a much more courageous, active and 'assertive' foreign policy; as he called for 'taking the national initiative back' (HUa/07.2011). The continued emphasis on regional collaboration was reflected in the words of FM János Martonyi claiming that cooperation among the Visegrád countries (...) is so close and intimate that 'some people within the Union are worried about the creation of a bloc and therefore they consider its existence a risk [to the Union]' (Hungarian Spectrum 2010a). Consequently, the European policy of Fidesz's administration would be further conditioned by prioritising the national stance in some areas not compatible with the European one. The increasing Euroscepticism was further demonstrated with PM Orbán frequently criticising the EU, its values and mode of operating (SGCa/05.2012).⁷³ As noted by one of the Hungarian experts 'PM Orbán could not decide whether the EU was a friend or an enemy' (Balázs 2011: 9). Moreover, in one of the speeches he 'compared the influence of the EU to the oppression of the Habsburg Empire and Soviet dictatorship' (Balázs 2011: 9). With reference

⁷¹ The 2010 Eurobarometer demonstrated that 45% of Hungarians hold the neutral view that membership is neither good nor bad (Standard Eurobarometer 73). Also in terms of perceived benefits stemming from the EU membership the 2010 Eurobarometer showed that only 44% of Hungarians indicated the positive effect (Ibid.).

⁷² During Orbán's term in office, the Hungarian parliament adopted the Status Law providing special legal status, albeit no citizenship, to ethnic Hungarians in surrounding countries.

⁷³ This was also emphasised in a speech given by the PM during the COSAC meeting in Budapest in February 2011 (HUa/07.2011).

to Russia, the Fidesz party's stance and Orbán's personal stance seem to project a rather ambivalent approach. During one of the conferences in 2007 Orbán commented on the conflicting mentalities of Russians and Europeans towards the energy policy, arguing that Russians tend to use natural gas and oil as a political weapon (Hungarian Spectrum 2010b, HUA/07.2011). In the 2008 joint letter co-signed by Georgia, Ukraine and Poland Orbán condemned Russian military aggression in Georgia. Nevertheless, during one of the visits to Russia in 2009, while acting as a vice-president for the European People's Party, Orbán emphasized his attempts to improve bilateral relations and extend cooperation (Hungarian Spectrum 2010b). Therefore, the announcement of more multi-dimensional and active foreign policy would also indicate an increasing emphasis on Hungarian-Russian relations.

Thus, following the argument of the relevance of national role conceptions for the Presidency's agenda this would indicate that issues of minority rights, enlargement policy and relations with the EU eastern partners should be featured high among the issues on the Hungarian Presidency's programme. The announcement of a more active foreign policy might indicate a rather different scenario than the one pursued by the Belgian Presidency - much more active and assertive with emphasis on national interests. As argued by Korkut the European stance of Fidesz, and thus the new government, 'is conditioned by the realization of its own conservative vision for the EU' (2009: 11). As further noted by the author 'Fidesz pays allegiance to the EU in a selective manner, without ascribing to it in full, particularly in the areas of gender rights and freedom of expression' (Korkut 2009: 11). The ideological stance of the government and in particular its approach towards the EU emerges thus as a key factor for the particular role preference towards its Presidency. This would challenge the traditional approach pursued by new Member States of aiming to prove themselves as good and socialised partners, rather than conveying their particular national stance, and as argued in the subsequent section this would also affect the expectations held at the European level towards Hungary and its time in office.

7.2 Expectations Towards the Hungarian Presidency

As argued before, Fidesz's distinctive ideological foundations would not only influence the foreign policy of Hungary, but also its particular strategy for the Presidency. One of the earliest indicators was the reorganisation and restructuring of the staff working in national ministries and REPER (HUA/07.2011, HUB/07.2011, HUC/09/2011). Thus six

months before the inauguration of its first Presidency the Hungarian government decided to replace a number of senior civil servants in charge of the Presidency's preparations (Vida 2011). This 'undermined trust in the Hungarian Presidency even before it began' (Kaczyński 2011: 3). This ambivalent image was further reinforced by the lack of previous experience and no institutional memory in exercising the Presidency's functions (SGCa/05.2012, BEa/03.2011). These steps combined with announcement of a more active and assertive foreign policy, created rather ambiguous and unclear expectations towards the approaching Hungarian Presidency (Ibid.).

Such an ambivalent attitude would be particularly relevant with reference to foreign affairs, as the second summit of the EaP was scheduled to take place in Budapest in May 2010. According to one of the Hungarian officials the fact that Hungary would be the official host for the summit would place its team in the centre of preparations in both functional and more importantly political terms (HUb/07.2011). This would enable Hungary to 'exert some sort of influence on the substance of the policy' (Ibid.). This was further highlighted by other officials who pointed that the organisation of the summit would create an opportunity for agenda setting; however this would be limited to rather informal activities with the key role played by the HRVP and EEAS (HUa/07.2011, HUb/07.2011). Moreover, it was also stressed that because Hungary, as well as other Member States from this region, were perceived as countries most interested in the EaP Hungarian officials would have to make sure to 'focus its performance according to European rather than national interests' (Ibid.). Thus, even with the new post-Lisbon system the Presidency was to contribute to the summit's preparations; however it was rather unclear how this would be organised and it would have to be further developed during the course of the Hungarian term in office (Ibid.). With the consolidation of the Lisbon context and the fully operational EEAS the general expectations were advocating for an administrative and functional Presidency 'taking part in foreign policy making, but not leading' (SGCa/05.2012). However, the emerging EaP summit fostered questions concerning further clarification on labour division with reference to the organisation of summits (SGCb/05.2012). Most of the interviewees indicated that this would be a real test for the new system when the new and old actors should be integrated in a single framework under a unified European leadership. It was also pointed out that the modest role of the Presidency, ensuring logistical and administrative support, might not be sufficient for the Hungarian PM who would like to be more visible on the European stage

during Hungary's time in office (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). Thus, yet again due to the lack of a clear role for the Presidency and some institutional expectations resulting from the organisation of the EaP's summit it was not clear what the Hungarian performance would be like.

The expectations towards the Hungarian Presidency were to a large extent affected by its domestic situation, as indicated by all of the Interviewees. In 2009, while facing possible bankruptcy, Hungary agreed on the bailout conditions as offered by the EU and IMF. This was, however, challenged by the new government which called for re-negotiation of these terms (Kaczyński 2011). The ambivalent political orientation of the new administration, combined with unclear economic plans, further reinforced the already unfavourable view of Hungary on the European stage. This was particularly relevant with reference to economic affairs as demonstrated earlier in the example of the Spanish Presidency, but it would also influence the general image of the Presidency. On the eve of its first Presidency Hungary was emerging as a rather Eurosceptic, uncooperative and economically unstable country, thus creating rather ambiguous expectations of its ambitious plans which might undermine the new post-Lisbon system (research interviews).

Pre-Presidency's Functions	The Rotating Presidency	The High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission	The President of the EC
Organisational Management	Moderate	High	Moderate
Neutral Brokering	Low	High	Moderate
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	High	High
External and Internal Representation	Low	High	High

Table 6. The Overview of Expectations Towards the Post-Lisbon Functions First Half of 2011 (Author's Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

7.3 Towards the Role Preference of the Hungarian Presidency

Hungary was the third and final country of the Presidency Trio, Spain-Belgium-Hungary. It had already become evident during the Belgian Presidency that due to the time factor the Trio's programme did not reflect the current European agenda and thus required radical modification (Drieskens 2011). The individual Belgian agenda thus shifted the focus towards economic governance and the handling of the ongoing economic and sovereignty crisis. Following the Belgian example Hungary revised its priorities and decided to remove two of its original priorities – water management and cultural diversity (Euractiv 16.11.2010). This caused a delay and the agenda was only published in December 2010, however the list of priorities better reflected the rolling European agenda (SGCa/05.2012, HUa/07.2011). This might provide further evidence for the argument by Missiroli and Emmanouilidis, who claimed that the added-value of the Presidency Trio is largely confined to the socialization effect during the preparatory phase, and the joint agenda 'disappear thereafter' and each individual Member State tends to 'act on its own' (2009: 4). The changes of the Hungarian programme reinforced the already ambiguous expectations towards the Hungarian administration as on the one hand the individual agenda was more *'in tune'* with the current working agenda' (HUb/07.2011); however this might also suggest a more individual, nationalistic, stance towards the Council Presidency (SGCa/05.2012). The Presidency's slogan of 'Strong Europe' as argued by Ágh 'was imported from home and indicated the dominance of its domestic policy over EU policies' (2012: 70).

7.3.1 'Strong Europe' - Official Programme of the Hungarian Presidency

The strategic framework of the Hungarian programme was structured around four main themes: *Growth, Jobs and Social Inclusion*; *Stronger Europe – Building on the Foundations and Protecting the Future*; *A Union Close to its Citizens* and the final one *Enlarging Responsibly and Engaging Globally*. The latter was divided into two sections covering enlargement and external relations. As already pointed out the main focus emphasised 'handling the consequences of the economic crisis and launching a new form of cooperation with the aim of ensuring that we will be better equipped to prevent crises in the future' (Hungarian Presidency 2010a: 4). In terms of implementation of the LT, this issue did not feature as one of the key tasks, as it did in the case of the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies. However, the new system was acknowledged throughout the official agenda, for example it was stated that 'The Presidency will be ready to work closely

with the actors in this new framework in order to provide coherence and efficiency in the international engagements of the EU' (Hungarian Presidency 2010a: 14). This is further reinforced with reference to the fledgling EEAS as 'it will be a shared task to make use of the opportunities provided by this new body, and to ensure that it becomes fully functional as soon as possible in all parts of the world' (Hungarian Presidency 2010a: 15). This might indicate that the transitional character, which significantly influenced the previous two Presidencies, would not be so relevant in case of the Hungarian Presidency and the period of 2011 Presidencies would no longer be regarded as transitional. Thus the Hungarian Presidency's influence on role institutionalisation might be more lasting.

More concrete actions for external relations were specified under the Operational Programme. The opening sentences provide some explanation on how Hungary sees its position within the inter-institutional relations: 'According to the Lisbon Treaty , in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy the rotating Presidency does not play a central role' (Hungarian Presidency 2010a: 53). Therefore, the role is limited to supporting the HRVP and EEAS in 'fulfilling all their tasks enshrined in the Treaty' (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the programme still outlines a set of priorities for the Hungarian period of the chairmanship: strategic partnerships, the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and CSDP. The EaP summit was seen as an opportunity to 'foster common understanding between Member States as well as between the EU and our Eastern neighbours' (Hungarian Presidency 2010a: 54). The post-Lisbon context is further reinforced as Hungary presents its role with reference to organisational management of the summit as 'a constructive role supporting the activities of the relevant EU actors' (Ibid.). Finally, following the example of the previous Presidencies the Hungarian team would aim to 'maintain close and efficient co-operation with the EP in pursuing the Union's trade policy objectives' (Hungarian Presidency 2010a: 55). Consequently, Hungary acknowledges both the post-Lisbon context of its Presidency as well as an opportunity for the limited pursuit of national priorities.

7.3.2 Role Preference - the Domestic, European and International Context

The choice of priorities illustrates that the original role preference contained to some extent an ambition to play a much more active role in European foreign policy, compared to the previous Belgian Presidency. Among main priorities, were those directly referring to EU foreign policy, such as strengthening the eastern dimension of the Euro-

pean Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) through the initiative of the EaP. In one of the interviews PM Orbán announced that 'promotion of the EaP would be one of the most important objectives in foreign policy' (ENPI 11.02.2011). This was to be facilitated by extensive preparations which would include a 'tour de capitals' by the PM in order to 'ensure extensive consultation process throughout Europe' in the anticipation of the summit (Ibid.). However, the foreign policy agenda was rather restricted to the subject of the enlargement and neighbourhood policy, rather than traditional CFSP issues. Consequently, the official agenda brought some clarification towards the role preference of the Hungarian Presidency. Reflecting the ongoing European agenda would indicate a more communitarian approach, while limiting the foreign policy agenda to more Community-related areas would indicate support for the new European-led post-Lisbon system with a limited, but still relevant, role for the Presidency.

As presented in the section on role expectations the ideological stance of the Fidesz administration not only influenced its domestic and foreign political strategy, but also to a large extent European and international perceptions. The rather ambivalent expectations towards the Hungarian administration became more negative in December 2010 when a new media law was passed in Hungary. The overall analysis of the legislation indicated that it would endanger the freedom of speech and of the press; this led to questioning of the democratic orientation of the government.⁷⁴ The subject of the compatibility of the law with European regulations and values was widely discussed in both EU and domestic circles just a few days before the official start of the Presidency.⁷⁵

The adoption of the media law undermined the image of the Hungarian Presidency, but it also had some more practical consequences as the first official presentation of the Hungarian Programme, which took place in the EP in January 2011, became dominated by the debates on the freedom of speech and questioning the democratic orientation of Orbán's government⁷⁶. This was also confirmed by FM Martonyi in one interview as he admitted: 'criticism about the Media Law has made the government's work more difficult' (Martonyi 2011). The perception of 'democratic backsliding' (Gati 2011) was fur-

⁷⁴ For example see OSCE (2011) 'Analysis of the Hungarian Media Legislation'; Economist 23.12.2010.

⁷⁵ For example Luxembourg FM, openly criticized the media law as it would 'violate the spirit and the letter of EU treaties' (The Telegraph 23.12.2010). Also Presidents of the Commission, EC and EP called for examination of the legislation (Ibid.).

⁷⁶ The transcript of the debate is available on the EP's website at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20110110FCS11408/13/html/Hungary's-six-month-Presidency-of-Council-launched-in-Parliament>.

ther reinforced by the subsequent steps of the government in the course of its Presidency: reducing the competences of the Constitutional Court and passing a new Constitution in April 2011. Both steps were regarded as damaging the foundations of the democratic state and weakening the democratic system (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012, EPc/05.2012). Furthermore, the new Constitution was criticised by both the EU and the Venice Commission, the legal watchdog of the OSCE.⁷⁷ As indicated by most of the interviewees, both Hungarian and European, Orbán's administration underestimated the spotlight that the Presidency brings with itself and thus did not expect such an extensive opposition with reference to the media law and other domestic reforms. This was the key factor for the Hungarian Presidency role enactment and its role preference. In the aftermath of the debate in the EP PM Orbán lost the remaining interest in the Hungarian Presidency and withdrew his personal engagement from the European level (ESb/12.2010). Thus, almost from the beginning the Presidency lacked sufficient political involvement at the highest political level. This, however, did not affect the Presidency's performance at the functional level which focused on organising and managing the Council's administrative proceedings. The role enactment of the Hungarian Presidency, as will be further analysed in the subsequent sections, demonstrates a clear division between the daily management of the Presidency and the Council's proceedings, as performed by civil servants mostly based in Brussels, and the limited involvement at higher political levels in Budapest. Such an approach allowed for consolidation of the more functional scenario as introduced by Belgium, even though this had not been the original plan.

Furthermore, even though the subject of the economic crisis featured as the top priority for the Hungarian Presidency its potential impact was heavily constrained by the fact that Hungary was not a member of the Eurozone and by its own difficult economic domestic situation. It was thus expected that this area would be managed by the POTEK who already confirmed its ability of political leadership with reference to EU economic governance (FR/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). Overall, it seems that the role preference at the political level was to a large extent influenced by expectations which emerged in the aftermath of the adoption of the new media law. The overall expectations towards Hungary had already been low, due to its lack of experience, small size and not being a

⁷⁷ For more details see the study by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (2011) 'The case of the Hungarian Government with the Venice Commission Assessment of Government reactions concerning the Venice Commission's opinion on the new Constitution of Hungary'.

member of the Eurozone, however the unfavourable perception of the Hungarian government and its domestic reforms further damaged the overall image and severely lowered any remaining expectations.

Due to the experience of the Spanish but most of all of the Belgian Presidencies some clarifications towards the post-Lisbon system started to emerge. The simplistic observation that there would no scope for involvement for the Presidency in foreign affairs became replaced by a more detailed analysis of the working arrangements, as these were needed for a smooth functioning of the complex and multi-actor system. It was evident that due to its traditional role in for example trade and development the Member State would still be involved in the management of EU foreign affairs; even though this involvement would be much different from the pre-Lisbon practice. Therefore, the Presidency would be expected to support the performance of the HRVP, fill in on her request, as well as provide functional contribution when needed. Additionally, the Presidency was also expected to contribute to quick and efficient implementation of the Lisbon Treaty's provisions by ensuring the formation of the EEAS, and in the case of the Hungarian Presidency ensuring its fullest operational capacity. Finally, through the management of COREPER II and the GAC the Presidency would be expected to contribute towards the overall coherence over EU external relations. Thus, as demonstrated by the example of the first Presidencies, the post-Lisbon Presidency would face general expectations towards the role of the institution as well as more individual expectations associated with the particular Member State in the chair, which might either empower or constrain the particular behaviour of individual Member States.

7.4 The Hungarian Presidency in Office – Role Enactment

The subsequent part of the chapter will focus on the role enactment of the Hungarian Presidency while in the chair of the EU Council. The analysis will take into account previously identified factors both enabling and constraining the Member State's performance while in the chair. The sections are structured according to the pre-Lisbon functions of administrative management, representation, both internal and external and honest broker as was the case of the previous two Presidencies. However, the empirical analysis will be completed with several case studies which might provide a more in-depth analysis of the interplay of various role concepts as affecting the role making as well as institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency's role.

The Hungarian Presidency was the first Presidency to perform alongside the EEAS and its permanent chairmanship over most of the Council's WGs and other preparatory bodies in the area of foreign policy. With the official take off of the EEAS in December 2010 it achieved only initial operational capability in January 2011. It became apparent that the process of nominating chair holders of various Council configurations would be still ongoing throughout the period of the Hungarian Council chairmanship.⁷⁸ The EEAS's college of directors was only completed on April 1, 2011 with the appointment of Mara Marinaki as the managing director for global and multilateral issues (CEU 2011a). Consequently this might indicate the transitional character of the Hungarian Presidency and thus prolong the transition period of the post-Lisbon European foreign policy.

7.4.1 Organisational Management

In the anticipation of the EEAS's permanent chairmanship some transitional working arrangements were set up from January 2011 onwards; however in contrast to the previous arrangements under the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies most of the WGs were to be chaired by the European representatives, for example the COEST was chaired by a representative of the SGC (SGCa/05.2012). This reflected the growing tendency towards limiting the Presidency's involvement in foreign affairs stemming from the fledgling EEAS (SGCa/05.2012). The potential chairmanship by Hungarian officials was seen as a continuation of the transitional character of the institutional post-Lisbon arrangements and might have resulted in a strengthening of the position of the Presidency in post-Lisbon management over foreign affairs; thus one of the first goals of the developing EEAS was to set a practice of treating the country holding the Presidency as a regular Member State (EEASa/04.2012).

This quickly proved to be unrealistic as the Lisbon Treaty introduced a complex institutional architecture with a fragmented management structure over EU external relations. The Presidency maintained its chairmanship over the main Council's preparatory body COREPER II ensuring the horizontal coordination and oversight of the legislative man-

⁷⁸ The first two managing directors were appointed on 29 October, 2010 with Helga Schmid as the Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs and Maciej Popowski as the Deputy Secretary General for Inter-institutional Affairs. Further nominations were confirmed throughout December 2010. For the information of the top management nominated for EEAS see the EEAS's update information at http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/251010_en.htm (accessed on 30.07.2013).

On 1 January, 2011 1643 permanent officials from the European Commission and the Council were transferred to the EEAS. For details see EU (2010b).

agement of external affairs. Thus in order to ensure both vertical as well as horizontal coordination over the EU external relations, on the initiative of the SGC, preparatory meetings started to be convened regularly with the aim of gathering representatives of various European institutions working on various external policies (SGCa/05.2012). The Hungarian officials became involved in the management of EU external affairs and responsible for ensuring coordination, both vertical, across various Council configurations, and horizontal, across various external policy areas. Thus, the initiative, as advocated by the SGC, enabled for maintaining the Presidency's role as a coordinator over the EU external affairs and thus ensuring its post-Lisbon role. This however was a result of the institutional feedback stemming from the developing post-Lisbon architecture rather than a deliberate attempt on the behalf of the Presidency. Such a development was welcomed neither by the EEAS, as they were concerned with undermining its position and role in foreign affairs (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012), nor by Hungarian civil servants who felt uneasy and confused about their role without support from Budapest (HUa/07.2011, HUb/07.2011).

The first half of 2011 brought some indications towards the new foreign policy making process; firstly the overall role of COREPER II started to decrease as decisions were made at the lower level of WGs and PSC (HUb/07.2011). This was argued to be a deliberate attempt by the HRVP to minimise the influence of countries on the EU decision making process (GB/05.2012, FR/05.2012). The agenda of COREPER II started to feature an increasing number of 'A' issues, which had already been decided and agreed on at the level of WGs, without leaving any space for political discussion at the ambassadorial level (GB/05.2012). This was to further decrease the potential role of the Presidency in terms of structuring the agenda. On the other hand, some informal practices had established the Presidency in a more privileged position vis-à-vis other countries. The representatives in the chair emerged as 'more equal than others' thus being more likely to take the floor during the meetings (HUb/07.2011, HUC/09.2012). According to the EEAS's officials Hungary did not overuse this practice to present national preferences, rather it presented its stance with reference to potentially relevant issues and policy areas being in the charge of the Presidency, thus further strengthening the rather background and coordination role of this institution (Ibid.). This was mostly attributed to the functional character of the Hungarian Presidency (BEb/03.2011).

Some clashes emerged between the Hungarian Presidency on one side and EEAS and the HRVP's cabinet on the other side with reference to the structure of the agenda for the Gymnich meeting (Grevi 2011). Finally the Presidency's proposal of including the enlargement policy was included in the schedule of the meeting, however the Presidency's role in preparations of the Gymnich meeting as indicated by one of the interviewees remained 'a rather grey area without any formal determination' (Grevi 2011: 11). The cooperation between the HRVP, EEAS and the Hungarian Presidency ran smoothly overall, however some clashes were reported. These mostly referred to the 'management style of both EEAS and HRVP' which, as indicated by most of the interviewees, lacked not only strategic planning towards EU foreign affairs but most of all lacked general mid- and long-term planning. This was visible in the late distribution of documents and lack of sufficient preparation for the Council's meetings. Some of the interviewees highlighted the 'HRVP's micromanagement style', but also the fact that both the HRVP and EEAS were largely influenced by the Commission's experience and thus aimed for a more independent system of policy making which side-lined the Member States. As cited by one of the interviewees 'it was like having the 28th Member State at the table' (GB/05.2012). As further observed by this interviewee 'Ashton and EEAS were trying to run CFSP as yet another Community area' (GB/05.2012).

Consequently, due to the fragmented management and chairmanship over external affairs the Presidency maintained its involvement and role by ensuring horizontal and vertical coordination and thus being closely involved in the management of external affairs due to its chairmanship of other WGs dealing with external relations and COREPER II. However, this was not used by the Hungarian officials to pursue particular national preferences as outlined in the Presidency's programme. This was partially due to the lack of strong national preferences in the area of foreign affairs, and partially due to the limited involvement at this highest political level. As argued before, after the initial period and turmoil caused by the Hungarian internal affairs, the Presidency's management was left to Brussels-based officials who did not want to show any initiative, rather waiting for the new institutions to take the leading role (HUd/07.2011). Thus the Presidency's role emerged in a rather informal way by ensuring greater efficiency and coherence to post-Lisbon European foreign policy.

Even though the agenda of the Presidency Trio as well as the individual programme of the Hungarian Presidency set some priorities in the area of external relations, the Hun-

garian involvement in the EU legislative management was limited to supporting the official agenda and the EU stance as set by the permanent chairs (SGCb/05.2012). The Hungarian representatives attended the meetings in their national capacities, however still mostly refraining from taking strong national positions, rather favouring the EU official line as presented by the European officials; consequently even when taking the floor in a national capacity the Hungarian officials were trying to follow the European stance (HUa/07.2011). This could indicate that even the limited role still reflected the pre-Lisbon practice of the Member State in the chair acting in the EU rather than a strictly national capacity.

7.4.2 External and Internal Representation

The Hungarian team continued with the emerging practice of deputising the HRVP. The role of the EU external representative was performed by Hungary even in the pre-Presidency period as, upon request by the HRVP, FM Martonyi represented the EU in Hanoi, during the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference and Regional Forum. The summit was however criticised for 'leaving behind a set of flat statements by its representative, an unexpectedly low-profile EU Foreign Minister', thus missing an opportunity for advancing cooperation between the EU and Asia (Delgado Rivera 2010). However, this was mostly attributed to the lack of strategic thinking and planning at the European level than the HRVP not attending the meeting (ESc/12.2010, SGCb/05.2012). Furthermore, in October 2010 the FM co-chaired the EU-Tajikistan and EU-Uzbekistan Association Councils on behalf of the HRVP (Hungarian Presidency 2010b). As noted by Enikő Győri, Minister of State for EU Affairs: 'the Lisbon institutional framework has sufficient flexibility for the Presidency to manage affairs keeping in view the interests of the EU and to the satisfaction of all the Member States' (Európai Tükör 2010). Yet, as indicated by a Hungarian official, the EEAS aimed to maintain this practice in as minimal a role as possible thus issuing detailed instructions for the Presidency's delegations (HUa/07.2011, HUC/09.2012).

Hungary also hosted the 10th Meeting of ASEM during which it officially represented the EU.⁷⁹ Originally the meeting was to be held on 28-29 March, 2011 in Tokyo, however due to the Japanese earthquake Hungary emerged as the most natural replacement

⁷⁹ ASEM includes the 27 Member States of the EU and the European Commission's representative on [on the part of different areas of Europe the Secretariat of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)], and its ten Member States on the part of Asia, as well as Australia, South Korea, India, Japan, China, Russia, Pakistan, Mongolia and New Zealand.

(HUb/07.2011).⁸⁰ Traditionally, organisation of ASEM's summits was conducted jointly by two European coordinators, the European Commission and the Presidency, and two Asian countries.⁸¹ Hungary hosted two meetings, the first of executive officials on 18-19 April, 2011⁸² and then FMs on 6-7 June 2011 (Hungarian Presidency 2011). Nevertheless, with reference to the substance of the meetings Hungarian officials exercised only limited influence, rather relying on instructions supplied by the EEAS, but this was also because Hungary still lacked clear strategic priorities towards the Asian region (HUb/07.2011).

Hungary also became the host of the 21st ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly held on 14–18 May, 2011, gathering representatives of 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the delegation of the EP (Hungarian Presidency 2011a). The Hungarian Presidency took this opportunity and put the issue of water management on the agenda during the second day of the meeting (HUb/07.2011). Almost 96% of the Hungary's water supply comes from abroad, which enabled the country to develop extensive knowledge of cross-border cooperation and particular expertise in the subject of water management. This particular interest was also reflected in the attempts to advance this issue higher up the European agenda by Hungarian officials within the framework of the EU development policy. FM Martonyi also acted in an EU capacity when emphasising the EU determination to maintain its budgetary assistance commitments to the countries of this region (HUA/07.2011). He also acted as a co-chair of the foreign affairs ministers of the 27 EU countries and 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries held in Brussels on 31 May, 2011. On each of these occasions the Hungarian team was issued instructions by the HRVP's cabinet; however as argued by one of the interviewees even in the presence of these instructions a Member State is capable of focusing the meeting on some areas of particular national interest which are alongside the European ones, for example water management (HUA/07.2011, HUb/07.2011).

Hungary continued the practice of representing the EU externally in the framework of its national embassies in Libya, Iran and Belarus, as analysed in the subsequent section. Nevertheless, the Hungarian involvement in Libya was limited to performing a func-

⁸⁰ ASEM is an informal consultation forum between Europe and Asia composed of representatives of the EU and ASEAN, started as an initiative of Singapore and France.

⁸¹ On behalf of Asia, one is an ASEAN member, the other is a non-member of ASEAN.

⁸² ASEM SOM (ASEM Senior Officials Meeting) is responsible for coordinating, cooperation and preparations of the high-level meeting of the FMs.

tional role in coordinating evacuation and ensuring a physical presence on the ground rather than playing a meaningful diplomatic role. This was confirmed by the HRVP herself in one of the interviews, while commenting that Hungary would not be required or expected to play any mediating role in the Libyan crisis.⁸³ This further illustrated expectations at the European level potentially limiting the role for the Hungarian Presidency to rather focus on technical and functional dimensions of the crisis management.

7.4.3 Neutral Brokering

Neutral brokering was one of the key functions in the pre-Lisbon context as the Presidency was responsible for driving the European legislation forward by fostering positions acceptable to all of the Member States. The new institutional set up transferred the official management of foreign affairs into the hands of the HRVP and POTEK. This would indicate that the Presidency would not be expected to play the role of an honest broker. Since the chairmanship of most of the WGs and other Council's preparatory bodies was chaired by European representatives Hungary could have shed the pre-Lisbon Presidency's practice of neutrality and presented national positions. However, as already demonstrated earlier, both Belgium and Hungary had 'a rather special sense of loyalty' towards the HRVP and EEAS and thus refrained from the pursuit of national interests, rather supporting the development of the European position (SGCb/05.2012, HUa/07.2011). The Hungarian performance in the function of neutral brokering will be further analysed using the case studies of the debate on the EEAS and HRVP which emerged in May 2011 and the review of the ENP.

7.4.3.1 The debate on the EEAS and HRVP

The Hungarian Presidency took over from the Belgian Presidency a mediating role between the emerging EEAS and Member States. The management of foreign affairs remained a challenging task with the EEAS still developing its operational capacity over the first half of 2011. However, the general perception of 'mismanagement' was mostly attributed to the HRVP's management practices. The ongoing perception that the daily management and organisation of Council's meetings was worse than in the pre-Lisbon period started to be voiced by Member States (SGCa/05.2012).

On May 4, 2011 the Belgian FM for the first time publicly criticised the HRVP's performance as 'characterised by silence on important foreign policy issues, with little

⁸³ For details on the HRVP's statement see HIR24 (25.02.2011).

long-term strategy and poor management of her agenda' (Willis 2011). He further pointed out that the vacuum created was filled by individual Member States thus strengthening the intergovernmental character of EU foreign policy making. One of the examples was the joint UK-France-Germany statement issued in the aftermath of the lack of a common EU response towards the events in the North Africa (Ibid.). This behaviour by the Belgian FM constituted an official rupture with the practice followed thus far of supporting the HRVP.⁸⁴ This revealed rather conflicting expectations towards the EEAS among various Member States and European institutions.⁸⁵ This was further illustrated by the example of the EEAS's budget and the discussion held during the FAC on May 23, 2011. The UK rejected the HRVP's proposal calling for a 6% increase in the EEAS's budget. The British Minister for Europe, David Lidington, pointed out that the HRVP and EEAS were trying 'to do too much' (Traynor 2011). In contrast, French FM Juppe urged the HRVP to be more active even in the absence of the common voice among all of the Member States (Ibid.). In addition to this, the Austrian foreign ministry submitted a discussion paper arguing for a greater role of the EEAS and the EU Delegations in terms of consular protection and crisis management (HUb/07.2011).⁸⁶ It also called for increased 'information exchange and calls for better distribution of sensitive documents, blaming current problems on security concerns and restrictions at EU delegations' (Willis 2011). Thus, it became apparent that there was a lack of agreement among Member States with reference to the role of the HRVP and EEAS as well as the further development of the EU foreign policy.

The added value of the extensive EU Delegation system was particularly appealing for small Member States with limited national resources. The European Voice's article cited a diplomat from one of the small Member States stating that 'The Brits are trying to strip this down, while we want to build it up' (Willis 2011). He further stated that 'smaller countries viewed the service as a way to amplify their voice – a megaphone –

⁸⁴ The negative outlook on the post-Lisbon EU foreign policy was strengthened by the speech delivered by the British FM William Hague on May 4, 2011. While listing the UK's strategic allies the US was prioritised over the EU. Furthermore, Hague summarised the British stance on the EU foreign policy by stating his personal opinion in which he admitted that he has 'never believed that the EU could or should act as if it were a nation state with a national foreign policy' (cited in Rettman 2011a). He further stated that 'any attempt by EU institutions to do so would end in embarrassing failure' (Ibid.). The renewed emphasis on the bilateral relations in the British national role conception was further reflected in portraying the EU membership in the general framework of Britain's role in multilateral institutions (Ibid.).

⁸⁵ Further support was voiced by the German FM Guido Westerwelle; for details see Gebauer and Volkery (2010).

⁸⁶ Also see Vogel (2011a).

while bigger nations tended to see it as a rival' (Ibid.) The Hungarian Presidency was absent from this debate and refrained from presenting any particular national preferences during its time in the office, seeing this as a potential obstacle towards the further cooperation with the HRVP and EEAS (HUa/07.2011, HUb/07.2011). Some insights were offered by the Hungarian FM during a conference in Brussels concluding the Hungarian Presidency on 27 June, 2011, as he noted that 'EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton is doing her best so that this common foreign and security policy will be built up ... but it's not yet there' (Novinite 2011), thus he emphasised the working progress of the fledgling system.

The Member States continued criticising the last-minute preparations of the FAC and the general style of meetings management. The Hungarian Presidency having a special feeling of loyalty towards the EEAS refrained from any criticism. It tried to establish itself as a communication channel in order to clarify expectations of Member States towards the permanent chairmanship of the WGs and other Council's configurations. It also aimed to facilitate discussions on possible working arrangements aimed at ensuring greater efficiency of foreign affairs management (HUe/07.2011). However, this is not what Hungary was expected to do, at least by most of the Member States, in particular the large ones. This would require involvement at the highest political level, which was perceived as very limited in the case of the Hungarian Presidency (SGCb/05.2012); thus its mediation role was limited due to no demand and the low political level of the Hungarian Presidency (HUa/07.2011 and HUb/07.2011).

7.4.3.2 The Review and Debate on the ENP

The review of the ENP started as a standard exercise to be led by the European Commission, however with the events unfolding in North Africa, as well as the deteriorating situation in Belarus as a result of the rigged presidential elections held in December 2010, the EU was forced to acknowledge that its performance thus far in the neighbourhood had not been successful and failed to enforce its values in action.⁸⁷ Thus, by admitting that the EU tends to favour security over democratisation of the regions in its Southern neighbourhood a new approach was expected to bring a revised policy towards this region as well as in the general framework of the ENP (HUd/07.2011).

⁸⁷ For details on the analysis of the EU approach see COM and EEAS (2011) 'A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood. A review of European Neighbourhood Policy', Brussels.

The Arab Spring events reinforced the internal divisions among Member States with reference to the ENP and distribution of EU funding. Thus countries traditionally associated with their support for the Southern dimension strengthened their calls for an increase in the level of funding for the countries in North Africa. This was expressed in a non-paper letter sent by the FMs of France, Spain, Greece, Malta, Cyprus and Slovenia to the HRVP on February 16, 2011 calling for a shift in the current EU assistance from East to South.⁸⁸ Italian FM Frattini called for the creation of 'a Marshall Plan type of funding mechanism' which would allow them to assist with the democratisation of the Southern neighbourhood and thus strengthening the EU presence and influence in this region' (Frattini 2011).

This brought a reaction from 'the second block' advocating an increase in integration with the EU eastern neighbours mostly associated with the Central and Eastern European states. A compromise position was proposed by German FM Guido Westerwelle. In his letter addressed to the HRVP he favoured application of stricter conditionality and the performance of the neighbourhood countries as the main conditioning factor of the level of cooperation (Ciechanowicz and Gotkowska 2011). This need for a more differentiated approach towards the EU neighbours was also expressed by the FMs of Sweden Carl Bildt and of Poland Radosław Sikorski in the letter sent to the HRVP in October 2010 (Rettman 2010b). In its capacity as the Presidency Hungary prepared a non-paper in anticipation of the extraordinary meeting of the EC on the Southern Neighbourhood on March 11, 2011.⁸⁹ It set out its vision for the EU response to the Arab Spring by advocating assistance in democratic transition and advancing frameworks for experience sharing with particular focus on the economic situation. It was further stressed that 'although recent dramatic developments have focused the Union's political attention on its Southern Neighbourhood, the EU must remain fully committed to strengthening relations also with its Eastern European Partners' (Hungarian Presidency 2011b). Nevertheless, apart from this paper Hungary did not manage to position itself as an honest broker between Member States and exercise any influence on the substance of the review. It was Poland, the subsequent Member State in the chair of the Presidency in the second

⁸⁸ The letter is available at http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/Lettre_a_Mme_Ashton.pdf (accessed on 30.07.2013).

⁸⁹ Another non-paper was presented by European People's Party MEPs Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (Poland), György Schöpflin (Hungary), Andrey Kovatchev (Bulgaria), Eduard Kukan (Slovakia) and Traian Ungureanu (Romania) on 25 May, 2011. The copy is available at <http://www.euractiv.com/europes-east/non-paper-european-neighbourhood-analysis-505103> (accessed on 30.07.2013).

half of 2011, that aimed to play a major role in redesigning the EU democratisation policy by proposing creation of a more flexible and rapid funding instrument. This will be further discussed in the subsequent chapter on the Polish Presidency where it will be demonstrated that Poland's proposal suffered from the fact that it was perceived as not capable of neutral brokering as it had been already strongly associated with the Eastern dimension of the ENP. Therefore, Hungary might have been better positioned to seek a balanced approach within the new approach of the ENP.

The demand for honest brokering with reference to every day management of foreign affairs decreased towards the Presidency as it was the HRVP and the EEAS, in particular the chairs of the WGs, that were to seek compromises and develop solutions among Member States. Nevertheless, as the example of both the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies demonstrated some neutral brokering was required with reference to the relationship between the HRVP and EEAS on one side and the Member States on the other side; yet Hungary was not perceived as the most suitable actor to do this. Thus, Hungarian officials refrained from commenting on the style and efficiency of performance of both the HRVP and EEAS and did not play any relevant role in the ongoing debate. Furthermore, even though the ENP was one of the few priorities in the area of external relations Hungary did not manage to influence the process of its reviewing by mediating between countries traditionally supporting the Southern versus the countries supporting the Eastern dimensions. This was not perceived by Hungarian civil servants as the expected behaviour from either the Presidency or Hungary (HUa/07.2011) and there was no input at the higher level.

7.4.4 Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership

With the EEAS in place it was its representatives that were supposed to manage the European cooperation in the area of foreign affairs and exercise agenda setting thus replacing the Presidency in its pre-Lisbon role. However, as the above analysed case studies demonstrated the complex institutional structure of post-Lisbon foreign policy making enabled Hungary to perform some of the functions, which put this country in a more privileged position and thus potentially offered access to additional resources. This could have been used, as it had been in the pre-Lisbon context, to ensure promotion of Presidency's priorities and influencing the European agenda according to the national preferences. The agenda-shaping powers of the Hungarian Presidency will be assessed

in the subsequent section with the example of the EaP and the Libyan crisis as areas of the greatest involvement of the Hungarian Presidency.

7.4.4.1 Eastern Partnership

The Hungarian Presidency set itself a few goals in the area of foreign affairs; one of them was the Eastern dimension of the ENP and in particular the organisation of the second summit which was to be held in Budapest in May 2011. However, already in February 2011 Budapest announced postponement of the summit and that it would be co-hosted by the Polish Presidency (Vogel 2011b). It was apparent that it would be the Polish team that would be the main driving force behind the summit (SGCa/05.2012, HUb/07.2011). The official reason as stated by Hungary was the schedule and logistical difficulties, as the summit was to be organised a few days before the G8 summit.⁹⁰ Even though this was confirmed by the HRVP as she stated that 'there is nothing strange in the meeting postponement, an entirely logical decision was made',⁹¹ the fact that Hungary was not able to gather enough support and ensure the highest possible representation among Member States during the summit emerged as a more convincing argument (GB/05.2012, FR/05.2012, EPc/05.2012).⁹² As assessed by Balázs Dénes 'In February when the EaP top meeting was cancelled it was really difficult not to see that as a major diplomatic failure especially because of the obscure explanations of the postponement'; he further pointed out that it resulted in the Hungarian Presidency not hosting any major event (Dénes 2011).⁹³ When asked to comment on this unexpected change the former FM Balázs referred to it as 'a double loss for Hungary' (Népszava 2011). Hungary's position was further weakened when Poland announced the organisation of the 17th Central and Eastern European summit on the same day as the cancelled EaP's summit was supposed to take place. The additional weight to the meeting was added by the presence of the US President Barack Obama. This was widely commented on in the

⁹⁰ For details on the HRVP's statement see HIR24 (2011).

⁹¹ The text of the statement is available on the website of the Hungarian Presidency at <http://www.eu2011.hu/document/joint-decision-about-postponing-eastern-partnership-summit-press-release> (accessed on 05.05.2012).

⁹² One of the interviewees commented that during one of the press conferences one of the Hungarian foreign officials admitted that the some unsuccessful efforts had been made (BEb/03.2011).

⁹³ Presentation by Balázs Dénes at 'Success or Failure: Review of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union', the Hungarian Europe Society, the European Liberal Forum, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit and the Republikon Institute, 25.06.2011, Budapest.

Hungarian press and read as a sign of Orbán's becoming *persona non grata* on the European stage.⁹⁴

The Hungarian Presidency managed to keep the issue of the EaP high on the European agenda with reference to the sanctions against the Belarusian regime, EU-Ukraine negotiations on DCFTA and Moldova's trade preferences (Vandecasteele et al. 2013). However, as indicated by one of the interviewees the Hungarian Presidency rather followed the European agenda than exercised any agenda setting in the strict sense of proposing original initiatives. The European agenda started to be controlled by the EEAS and HRVP even if most of the Member States complained about the inefficient management of the FAC meetings and lack of political leadership. In March 2011 Hungary proposed to organise a special informal meeting of the development policy, which remained under the chairmanship of the Presidency, focusing on the issue of the ENP; this was however not followed up by the Hungarian officials and was not met with any enthusiasm at the European level (HUc/09.2012).⁹⁵ It was the Slovak government that organised a successful meeting with representatives of the EaP countries, Belarusian opposition as well as the HRVP and Commissioner Füle in the framework of its Presidency of the Visegrád Group (Euractiv 28.02.2011). Overall, as argued by Racz the EaP plays only a regional role in Hungarian foreign policy and thus it was not seen as the top priority for the Hungarian Presidency (2011). As argued earlier Hungary's strategic preferences have been reflected in the particular conceptualisation of its neighbourhood which prioritises the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova. The special focus on the latter two was reflected in the 'Danube Strategy', adopted under the Hungarian leadership, which aimed to present a comprehensive framework for the further development of this region. Specific conclusions on the Strategy were adopted during the GAC on April 13, 2011 (CEU 2011) and further endorsed by the EC on June 23/24, 2011 (EC 2011) on the basis of the Commission's proposal.⁹⁶ The significance of the Strategy was undermined by the fact that no new funding was to be pledged (Euractiv 01.03.2010); however one of the main priorities was identified as water management thus clearly reflecting the Hungarian original preference (HUc/09.2012).

⁹⁴ For example see Hungarian Spectrum (2011c).

⁹⁵ See also Hungarian Presidency (2011h).

⁹⁶ For details on the proposal see COM (2010) 'Communication on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region', 8.12.2010.

7.4.4.2 Libyan Crisis

The fact that Hungary was not invited to the Paris-led summit on Libya held on March 19, 2011 pointed to the irrelevancy of the Hungarian Presidency with reference to the political level of EU foreign policy making (Euractiv 28.02.2011).⁹⁷ As argued earlier Hungary's involvement in the management of the Libyan crisis was mostly limited to functional and technical assistance and stemming from the Presidency's competences in external areas of the EU crisis management policy; there was no influence on the political and strategic dimension which was made by big countries, such as France and the UK and to some extent by the HRVP, EEAS and European Commission (SGCa/05.2012, HUb/07.2011). The lack of involvement of Hungary in the Libyan crisis at the political level was further contrasted with the more active involvement of Poland as the FM was part of the Contact Group on Libya (MFA PL 2011a). He was also the first European senior official to visit Benghazi on May 11, 2011 and to recognise 'the interim rebel council as a *legitimate interlocutor*' (Reuters 2011a). Hungary did not use its potentially privileged access to information as well as other resources stemming from representing the EU in Libya and Belarus, rather agreeing to act in the background supporting the post-Lisbon actors.

7.4.5 The example of the Libyan Crisis

The contribution of Hungary towards role institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency will be further explored with the example of the Hungarian performance with reference to the Libyan crisis. Such an analysis will further demonstrate the position as well as expectations towards the Member State in the chair of the Council, with particular reference towards management and representation of the EU.

The events of the Arab Spring brought sharp divisions among Member States, which became particularly visible with the unfolding of the Libya crisis. Some Member States, led by the UK and France, started to advocate a military mission in order to bring the end of the Gadhafi's regime, while most of the Member States ruled out involvement in such action. Due to the lack of a united stance among Member States the HRVP was mostly absent and did not provide any strong leadership in the EU response to these events. This prompted some of the Member States to take their individual stance on this

⁹⁷ The Associated Press introduced the subject of the conference under the headline 'Orbán is missing, the rotating president, embarrassing' (HUa/07.2011).

issue. The Hungarian Presidency, along with the other permanent European institutions, was put in the spotlight and thus often asked to comment on these issues. In the light of the modest European guidelines, the Hungarian team had to often refer to the national foreign policy framework (HUb/07.2011). In the non-paper prepared for the extraordinary summit of the EC on the Southern Neighbourhood the Hungarian Presidency called for EU unity and support for the no-fly zone over Libya under the mandate of the UN Security Council while taking no position on a possible military mission (Hungarian Presidency 2011c). After the extraordinary meeting the Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán presented the adopted EU stance towards the Libyan situation. Favouring a more cautious approach the PM sided with countries refraining from military operations by emphasising that 'nothing would force Europe to go to war with the Arab countries' and that 'military operations that could result in losing the trust of Arab nations, must be avoided' (Hungarian Presidency 2011d). This was further stressed by FM Martonyi in his statement delivered on March 3, 2011 in which he 'welcomed the UN Security Council's decision on air strikes against Libya' (Gulyas 2011), but also pointed out that 'a military operation could only aim at protecting civilians and not at changing Libya's political system' (Hungarian Presidency 2011d); thus Hungary would not participate in the military operation against Libya. This position reflected the general stance of the Central European states, arguing that further military action was impossible due to the insufficient military capacities of these countries after already being involved in military missions in Afghanistan and their general reluctance caused by the Iraqi intervention (Kecskes 2011). Hungarian officials maintained its presence in EU foreign affairs by commenting on the most important issues, in general supporting the EU stance without shying away from presenting national stances, but only at the highest political level of the PM and MFA.

As pointed out earlier the initial controversies over the Hungarian government's actions influenced the performance of the Hungarian Presidency in the first two months of its Council chairmanship. This was also reflected in almost non-existent cooperation with the post-Lisbon European actors, the POTEK and the HRVP at the beginning of the year (SGCb/05.2012). Nevertheless, the following months brought the reorientation of the Presidency's management and the general cooperation ran smoothly with the Hungarian officials taking a supporting and background role in external affairs (SGCa/05.2012, FR/05.2012). As will be presented with the example of the Libyan crisis, the Presidency

still plays an important role in crisis management as it is still responsible for the management of numerous policies outside the competences of the HRVP and EEAS, such as the humanitarian affairs. On March 3, 2011 the Hungarian Minister of State for European Affairs joined Kristalina Georgieva, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, in a visit to Tunisia to establish cooperation with the transitional authorities and to assess the situation on the Libyan-Tunisian border (COM 2011a). FM Martonyi visited Egypt on March 22, 2011 in a similar exercise of assessing the situation on the Egyptian-Libyan border (Hungarian Presidency 2011c). However, Hungary was not part of the fact-finding mission sent by the HRVP on 6 March, 2011. It was headed by Agostino Mizzotto, the managing director for crisis response in the European External Action Service, and facilitated by the Italian government (Vogel 2011c). This showed the limits of the Presidency's capacity to actively engage at the European level.

Following the practice established by the previous Presidencies of assisting the emerging system of EU Delegations by ensuring representation by the Member State in the chair of the Presidency on behalf of the EU, Hungary became one of the few countries present in Libya acting as an official EU representative. The Hungarian embassy in Tripoli maintained its operations and Ambassador Bela Marton emerged as a coordinator of EU personnel still present in Libya at that time (Hungarian Presidency 2011e).⁹⁸ As a response to the HRVP's statement calling to stop the use of force (CEU 2011b) on February 19, 2011 the Hungarian ambassador was issued a statement by the Libyan foreign ministry threatening 'to suspend cooperation with EU on immigration issues if the EU keeps making statements in support of Libyan pro-democracy protests' (Reuters 2011b). Following the request from Member States on February 23, 2011 Hungary activated the Civil Protection Mechanism which is an EU-based mechanism enabling cooperation in crisis evacuation.⁹⁹ This was led in close cooperation both with the European

⁹⁸ Hungarian FM Janos Martonyi received a formal letter of gratitude from his American counterpart, Hillary Clinton, for Hungary's diplomatic activity during the recent military operation in Libya. Hungary's embassy in Tripoli was among the few that were not fully evacuated and continued to serve, providing assistance in the release of captured journalists and the handling of casualties of other nationalities. The Tripoli embassy became the representative of some 50 countries that decided to airlift their own personnel out of the violence-torn North African country (Racz 2011). Hungary is one of the three EU Member States which still have diplomats in the country, besides Cyprus and Greece.

⁹⁹ The European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism, the cooperation of Member States' disaster response bodies, is controlled by the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) seated in Brussels. The MIC stands on the alert on a 24/7 basis and immediately notifies Member States' civil protection authorities when it receives a request for assistance, either from any Member State or, as has been the case this time, from an EU institution. In such cases, the European Commission consults

Commission and the EEAS and the evacuation of the EU citizens was completed four days later.¹⁰⁰

Following the UN Security Council resolution of 26 February 2011 the Hungarian officials used one of the last remaining procedural advantages and presented the sanction proposal as an 'A' item on the agenda of the WG on Transport, Telecommunications and Energy on February 28, 2011 (HUA/07.2011). Under the chairmanship of the Minister for National Development Tamas Fellegi decided to apply a fast-track procedure to adopt sanctions (Ibid.)¹⁰¹. The original UN-based sanctions focusing on an arms ban were extended to stop the EU trading with the Libyan regime in particular reference to equipment which might be used for internal repression and imposed a visa ban on and froze the assets of a total of 26 individuals (Hungarian Presidency 2011g). Further extensions of the sanctions were dealt with in the framework of the FAC, for example on 11 March, 2011 the sanctions were extended to subsequent Libyan people and organisations, such as the Central Bank (CEU 2011c). Further restrictive measures adopted at the FAC on March 10, 2011 had been prepared by the Hungarian-led WG (Hungarian Presidency 2011c). This was however led by the HRVP and EEAS rather than by deliberate attempts of the Hungarian officials (HUA/07.2011, HUb/07.2011). Finally, the Hungarian team, in a coordinated effort with the European Commission and EEAS, put the issue of migration on the agenda of the Justice and Home Affairs Council. This facilitated the adoption of the decision to launch the Joint Operation Hermes 2011 with reference to the refugee crisis at the Italian island of Lampedusa and to take part in co-ordination of the exercise in Malta (Hungarian Presidency 2011b). The Libyan crisis demonstrated the complexity of the EU post-Lisbon external policy as a comprehensive approach requiring involvement of all of the European institutions involved in EU foreign policy, among them the HRVP and EEAS, POTEK and the Presidency.

The Hungarian experience further contributed to the development of the coordination mechanisms in terms of the EU representation. It also indicated a potential added value of the Presidency supporting the stance of European institutions and contributing addi-

the Council's rotating Presidency, and determines the course of action it needs to take to tackle the situation. Member States can resort to the Civil Protection Mechanism if their own resources are insufficient to properly handle the problem or disaster that affects them (Hungarian Presidency .2011e).¹⁰⁰ For the details on this issue see Hungarian Presidency (2011f) 'Libya: Hungarian Presidency facilitates evacuation of EU citizens'.

¹⁰¹ As pointed out by the Hungarian Presidency the sanctions were adopted less than 25 hours after the original UN decision making it the quickest adopted sanctions in the EU history (Hungarian Presidency 2011b).

tional national resources in the service of the EU. However, the Hungarian case study illustrated that the Presidency's replacement as the EU representative functions according to the availability of the HRVP and instructions prepared at the European level thus leaving only limited scope for the country in the chair of the Presidency to take advantage of this opportunity in pursuit of national preferences.

7.5 Role Assessment

The role assessment of the Hungarian Presidency reflects its internal divisions: 'political adventurism of the government and the professionalism of experts and the state administration' (Ágh 2012: 68). This was further reflected in other international assessments, for example Péter Balázs, the Hungarian expert, argued that at the functional level it was a generally good assessment of the Brussels-based team, 'but this cannot be said of the government level' (Népszava 2011). To a large extent the assessment of the Hungarian performance was overshadowed by the controversies with reference to domestic legislation, first the media law and then the constitution. Nevertheless, at the Brussels level the Hungarian team was positively assessed; in the area of foreign affairs the Hungarian officials worked to support the HRVP and emerging EEAS, enabling in particular the latter to establish itself on the European stage. The framework of regular consultation between the EEAS's and the Presidency's officials, as initiated by the SGC, not only provided a better cooperation and coordination platform, but also emerged as a more permanent mechanism to be repeated by subsequent Presidencies (SGCa/05.2012). Thus through its constructive and flexible approach the Hungarian team managed to further clarify the role of the Presidency and set some informal institutional expectations with reference to cooperation between the Presidency teams and the EEAS (SGCa/05.2012).

Additionally, even though officially the Hungarian Presidency was praised for its active contribution at the European level, this was done informally and did not result in any institutionalisation of these working arrangements, therefore limiting any potential formalisation of the greater role of the Presidency. Furthermore, as indicated by one of the interviewees, transferability of the Hungarian experience towards possible future crisis management actions was limited by referring to the Hungarian Presidency as 'working in the transitional period with only limited operational capacity of the EEAS's and fledgling EU Delegation's system' (HUa/07.2011); consequently suggesting that in the future the role of the rotating Presidency would decrease also in the area of management of an unexpected agenda.

Presidency's functions	Role expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency	Role expectations towards the Hungarian Presidency	Role preference	
			At the Brussels-level	At the Budapest-level
Organisational Management	High	Low	Moderate	Low
Neutral Brokering	Moderate	Lack	Moderate	Low
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	Lack	Moderate	Lack
External and Internal Representation	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low

Table 7 The Overview of Role Expectations and Role Preference of the Hungarian Presidency (Author's Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

7.6 Role Institutionalisation under the Hungarian Leadership – Towards Role Prescription

The Hungarian Presidency would be the first post-Lisbon Presidency operating alongside a fully-operated EEAS, thus it would bring further clarification of the post-Lisbon institutional dynamics and the more lasting scenario. Therefore, it was expected that Hungary would support the EEAS in becoming fully operational. The original role preference and the subsequent performance of the Hungarian Presidency was to a large extent affected by the ideological stance of the Fidesz administration as well as personal stance of PM Orbán, favouring a more conservative vision of the EU and more assertive national stance on the European stage. With a new foreign policy strategy calling for a more national and multidimensional foreign policy the Presidency was expected to perform a much more active role compared to the previous Belgian Presidency. However, with the adoption of the controversial media law the government undermined its position as well as the overall image of the Presidency from the early start of its time in the office. As a result of the increasing criticism at the European level PM Orbán limited his engagement in the Presidency's performance. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency was characterised by a visible division between its more functional dimension as per-

formed by the team based in Brussels and more political which was to be supplied at the highest political level from Budapest. This lack of political engagement of the Hungarian PM enabled the Presidency to perform its more low-key and functional role for which Hungary was positively assessed at the European level.

The analysis of the role enactment demonstrated that with the fledgling EEAS Hungary was still expected to play a more active role in order to compensate for the lack of resources at the European level. Moreover, the involvement of the Presidency in the management of some of the policy areas, for example trade and development, enabled Hungary to maintain its role in the post-Lisbon system. In the absence of a clear role prescription this created an opportunity for the Member State in the chair to use it not only to gain more spotlight on the European stage, but also for agenda shaping. However, with the permanent leadership of foreign affairs at the European level the Presidency's activities became more informal and indirect in line with the emerging expectations. Consequently, the analysis further confirms the relevance of the institutional feedback on the process of the role institutionalisation of the post-Lisbon Presidency. With reference to the second element of the proposed model - role making - the political context of the Hungarian Presidency limited its ability to pursue its original plan of more active chairmanship in the area of external relations. This would be a result of the personal stance of PM Orbán towards its European partners and in more general terms the European project. It seems that the fact that the Eurosceptic government, and in particular the PM, decided to limit the involvement enabled the Brussels team to exercise the Presidency according to the new post-Lisbon standard - a supportive, administrative, but hardly political Presidency. Thus, Hungary performed its Presidency efficiently in Brussels while 'banning it from Budapest' (HUb/07.2011).

The Hungarian Presidency brought further clarification towards expectations for the post-Lisbon Presidency and its inter-institutional position. Thus, the model of the so-called 'supporting Presidency'¹⁰² started to emerge with the Presidency playing a more active role in foreign policy making. Since no deputy was designated for the HR and with her exhaustive role of being also the Vice-President of the Commission it soon became clear that she was not capable of fulfilling all of the duties on her own. The need

¹⁰² See Gostyńska and Liszczyk (2011) .

to find a deputy at the appropriate political level became a pressing issue.¹⁰³ Therefore, the Hungarian FM and Minister for European Affairs were the ones deputising the HR during some of the meetings with third countries' representatives and in her contacts with the EP. This was perceived as beneficial for both of the actors as the country in the chair of the Presidency managed to regain some of its lost visibility at the European and international level.

All in all, the Hungarian Presidency further reinforced the 'Belgian scenario', setting informal, but already quite significant, expectations limiting the role of post-Lisbon Presidency in the previous function of political leadership, even if this had not been the original role preference. The particular context of the Hungarian Presidency might further limit its overall influence on the process of role institutionalisation; nevertheless, the scenario for 'supporting Presidency' started to become a widely accepted rule in the post-Lisbon context. The subsequent Polish EU Presidency was expected to further test the new rules in the second half of 2011 being the second, after Spain, big Member State to chair the post-Lisbon Council Presidency.

¹⁰³ The issue of ensuring a corresponding political level of the potential HR's deputy was a particular issue as far as the relations with the European Parliament were concerned (interview EP).

**Chapter VIII Poland in the Chair of the EU Council (January – June 2011):
'Testing the Limits of the Post-Lisbon Presidency's Influence'**

The ambitious original approach of the Hungarian Presidency in the area of external affairs was undermined by the particular political and domestic context which resulted in the division between the Brussels and Budapest-based Presidencies. The fully functional and efficiently run Presidency was challenged by the lack of sufficient political involvement at the highest political levels. Thus, even if not according to the original role preference, the actual performance of Hungary enabled further consolidation of the 'supportive, functional Presidency' initiated by Belgium. The positive role assessment of the functional and administrative support ensured by Hungarian officials towards both the HRVP and EEAS clearly demonstrated the limited space for the post-Lisbon Presidency to play an assertive leadership role in European foreign policy making. This also resulted in emerging role expectations and consolidation of a more lasting role prescription. Poland's extensive preparations indicated that the country would be seeking a much more active and more political Presidency in order to demonstrate its growing status on the European stage. This prompted the question of whether Poland would challenge the increasingly consolidated role expectation of a merely supporting Presidency and propose a different role preference.

This chapter continues with an analysis examining the Polish Presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2011 by applying the analytical framework as outlined in figure 6 of the model of the post-Lisbon Presidency's role institutionalisation.

8.1 National Role Conceptions – Polish Foreign and European Policies

As noted in the previous chapter, Polish and Hungarian national role conceptions were transformed after regaining independence in 1989 demonstrating considerable effects of the EU membership and Europeanization process (for example see Kamińska 2013, Toro 2013, Pomorska 2011). Thus, the main objective of the post-Soviet Polish foreign policy strategy focused on 'coming back to Europe' through ensuing prompt NATO and EU accession. The first was seen as a guarantee of sovereignty and security, while the latter as a 'civilisation choice' in terms of political and economic development (PLb/04.2012). The EU accession process became associated with the extensive political, social and economic transition that Poland and other countries in the region underwent in the 1990s. Nevertheless, throughout this period the US maintained its special

status as the most desired ally for countries in Central and Eastern Europe due to its international status (Edwards 2006). The emphasis on European integration and maintaining the special relationship with the US would become a source of Poland's ambiguous performance on the European stage pre- and post-accession. Since 2008, with the significant changes introduced by Tusk's administration, Poland would increasingly pursue a more cooperative and consensus-seeking approach on the European and international stage. The revisited role conception, maintaining a high profile on Eastern Europe while pursuing a much more cooperative stance towards European partners and Russia, would result in a more constructive and increasingly influential position of Poland within the region as well as within the EU. Therefore, Poland managed to consolidate its status as the expert on issues associated with the Eastern dimension of the ENP, but also increasingly becoming a key player with reference to other issues, such as energy policy and economic governance (research interviews). Thus, it seems that for Poland its Presidency, instead of being simply the traditional membership test, would rather be a test of its position and influence on the European stage.

Poland's initial three years within the EU were marked as a rather ambiguous time illustrated by an unclear membership strategy (PLb/04.2012). This was to some extent influenced by its traditional focus on the bilateral relationship with the US. The particular Atlanticism of Poland, as well as other new Member States, became one of the most divisive issues in the history of the European project (Edwards 2006) and resulted in one of the most disruptive divisions within the EU. The difference between the 'old' and 'new' Europe was best visible with reference to their opposing stances on the US 'War on Terror' and in particular the invasion in Iraq. Poland, along with seven other countries, issued a letter of support and took an active part in the US-led operation in Iraq by contributing military and financial support¹⁰⁴. This was done in contrast to both Germany and France and the President of the latter country issued a strong statement criticising the 'new Europe' (Zaborowski 2004). Poland started to be perceived as 'a Trojan horse of America within the Europe' (Coskun 2007: 77) which largely undermined its position on the European stage, but also on a more substantial level resulted in Poland's preference for maintaining the intergovernmental character of the EU foreign policy as well as prioritising NATO's military cooperation over the fledgling European framework. The continued support for its US ally as well as its assertive stance during the ne-

¹⁰⁴ For further details on the letter see Champion (2003).

negotiation on the EU Constitutional Treaty with reference to the voting system triggered a worsening of the Polish image on the European stage. At that time Poland was often referred to as 'the EU new awkward partner' (Grabbe 2003). This ambiguous and assertive, yet not very influential, approach continued to mark Poland's behaviour over the first few years of its EU membership. Despite this, Poland remained one of the most Euro-optimistic countries with the one of the highest percentages of people supporting membership and indicating a positive impact of EU membership¹⁰⁵

One of the areas of national importance for Poland's European policy was the subject of EU relations with its Eastern neighbours; this was to become 'the Polish speciality in the EU' (Copsey and Pomorska 2010: 3). Thus, even before the official accession Poland had tried to shape the emerging EU policy towards this region by trying to shift the focus of EU neighbourhood relations from the South to the East.¹⁰⁶ The 2004 enlargement shifted the EU external borders towards the East and thus creating a new immediate neighbourhood. The Polish and EU approaches towards the region of Eastern Europe significantly differed at the time: while Poland had extensive relations at political, economic and social levels, the EU rather saw the region as the domain reserved for Russia and thus did not pursue any active policy (Sabik 2008: 3). In 2003 Poland presented a paper advocating elaboration of the Eastern policy of the EU which would include a clear membership perspective for the countries of Eastern Europe, namely Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova (Sabik 2008: 1-16). Poland did not manage to persuade any meaningful changes at the European level at the time; however the issue of Eastern relations would become one of the key features of the Polish European policy. Nevertheless, the first few years of the Polish membership in the EU became dominated by the increasingly Eurosceptic administration led by the Kaczyński brothers.

After winning the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections a more nationalistic party Law and Justice took control over politics in Poland. The new administration announced 'a new beginning' which would aim for 'not only a break with the past but the political consensus which had governed Poland since 1989' (Bobinski 2007: 2). With reference to foreign policy the government called for a new active and more assertive foreign policy as Poland 'would not be conducting foreign policy *on their knees* with respect to their partners abroad' (cited in Bobinski 2007: 2). The new rhetoric presented

¹⁰⁵ In 2010 78% of Poles were in favour of the EU membership according to Eurobarometer Standard 74.

¹⁰⁶ For details on the Polish attempts to shape the EU's policy towards Eastern Europe see for example Kamińska 2007, Klatt 2011.

the EU membership as 'a nuisance' and even against the traditional Polish values and the way of life' (Bobinski 2007: 11). The Eurosceptic attitude was further reflected in the ongoing negotiations on the future of the Constitutional Treaty. The new administration adopted a tough stance towards the voting system in the Council under the slogan 'Nice or Death' (Bobinski 2007: 10). Thus extremist rhetoric damaged relations with European partners and in particular with Germany by arguing that the voting system as proposed in the Constitutional Treaty would ensure Germany's position as the hegemonic power in Europe (Bobinski 2007: 11). The particular ideological stance of the Law and Justice administration also influenced the Polish stance towards Russia and due to worsening of the bilateral relations Poland vetoed re-negotiation of the EU-Russia Agreement for Partnership and Cooperation (Kamińska 2007). This was seen as a measure not 'aimed at Russia - but the EU itself' (Kamińska 2007: 5). Such uncooperative and 'single-out' behaviour left Poland with no allies and as described by one of the European official 'no Member State would ever like to be in the position of Poland at that time' (cited in Copsey and Pomorska 2010: 10). This not only revealed the lack of experience of Poland within the EU, but also significant differences among Member States with reference to the relationship with Russia and Eastern Europe. The Polish influence on the European stage was affected by the credibility of the Polish government due to its ideological stance and particular style of policy making. As argued by Szczerbiak Poland lacked a coherent and coordinated strategy for its EU membership and its European policy was 'characterised by a series of unsuccessful and ill-thought-through initiatives, and unprepared statements' (2012: 18). This was also reflected in a rather ambiguous stance towards promoting an intergovernmental vision of the EU while at the same time 'calling for a stronger common stance vis-à-vis Russia' (Szczerbiak 2012: 20).

The turning point came in 2007 after the Civic Platform party won the parliamentary elections with one of the most spectacular victories in the post-communist elections. The new government led by Donald Tusk called for 'return to normality' (Tusk 2007) after the controversial term in the office of the Kaczyński brothers. This was quickly branded 'the second return to Europe' (Świeboda 2007). One of the main priorities was to rebuild the image of Poland as a reliable and constructive partner on the European stage. Thus, the approaching Polish Presidency was seen as not only the traditional membership test for new EU members, but also a test of the new constructive approach

in European affairs (BEb/03.2011). Preparations for the Polish Presidency became an opportunity for restructuring the management of European affairs at the European level as well as developing a professional diplomatic service both in Warsaw and Brussels (BEb/03.2011). One of the immediate changes in the European strategy was adopting the priority of the quick and smooth ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. It was also reflected in a shift of support towards the further institutionalisation of EU foreign policy making (PLb/04.2012). Nevertheless, the refusal of President Kaczyński to ratify the Treaty until the conclusion of the second referendum in Ireland revealed how the ongoing rivalry at the domestic level damaged the government's efforts of improving its image at the European levels. This soon spread over other policy areas, such as foreign policy, for example the emerging turf wars over international representation, in particular with reference to the EC summits, became a common feature of Polish politics until the tragic death of President Kaczyński in the airplane crash in April 2010.¹⁰⁷

During the term of office of Tusk's administration Poland managed not only to improve its image among European partners, but also develop its skills of persuasive advocacy and alliance building.¹⁰⁸ Such an approach resulted both in securing a support for a common stance towards the Russian invasion of Georgia in May 2008 and in adoption of the joint Swedish-Polish initiative of the EaP. The issue of the Georgian invasion was seen as one of the major tests for Polish effectiveness on the European stage (PLd/05.2012). Poland initiated an extraordinary meeting of the EC and by referring to the subject of European stability and security managed to gather support for a statement condemning the Russian action (Cianciara 2009). This demonstrated the added value of the new approach as pursued by Tusk's administration. One of the cornerstones of the Polish strategies was aimed at improving bilateral relations within the EU, in particular with Germany and France. This was done in the framework of the 'Weimar Triangle' which Poland wanted to use for strengthening its position within the EU (PLd/05.2012). As indicated by one of the Commission officials 'it is important to recognise that Poland's role in the EU is highly conditioned by its relationship with Germany, which in turn is conditioned by Germany's relationship with Russia' (cited in Cianciara 2009: 6).

One of the biggest successes of the Polish diplomacy was the project of the EaP. It was a result of the 5-year period of Poland's learning 'do's and don'ts' of policy making with-

¹⁰⁷ One of the most relevant examples was the EU Summit in October 2008 during which Poland was represented by both PM Tusk and President Kaczyński. For details see Runner (2008).

¹⁰⁸ For details on this issue see Copsey and Pomorska 2010.

in the EU. With the main aim of securing its borders Poland was trying to initiate an EU policy towards the Eastern neighbours and placing it high on the EU agenda. The original aim of securing a membership perspective for Ukraine quickly turned out to be unrealistic and not capable of securing support from other Member States. Tusk's administration took a more pragmatic approach, rather focusing on the deepening of sectoral integration in various policy areas than bluntly calling for a membership perspective for countries in Eastern Europe (research interviews). During the 2004 Orange Revolution which challenged the rigged presidential election in Ukraine, Polish President Kwasniewski played a high profile role along the EU High Representative Javier Solana in the EU efforts to ease the political crisis. As noted by Szczerbiak the fact that this political crisis was handled in a peaceful manner was attributed to Poland's engagement and this was 'widely recognised as one of Warsaw's most constructive and successful international initiatives' (2012: 105). Therefore, the substance as well as agenda setting of the EaP demonstrated better understating of the European context by Poland. Moreover, by securing Sweden's support as a co-founder of the proposal Poland managed to take advantage of Sweden's position and its more extensive experience and skills in European policy making. Even though the proposal was assessed as 'somewhat lacklustre, and did not represent anything particularly new for the eastern neighbours' (Copsey and Pomorska 2010) the project became a flagship of Polish diplomacy within the EU and thus emerged as one of the key national priorities in the area of foreign policy for the Presidency.

Over the previous six years Poland has aimed at consolidating its position and influence on the European stage. The perception of Poland significantly improved, which was demonstrated by awarding the Charlemagne Prize to PM Tusk on the eve of the Polish Presidency in recognition of 'efforts in promoting European understanding' and 'bringing the former Soviet-bloc country in the heart of Europe' (Deutsche Welle 2010). As argued by Kamińska Poland not only became a key European player 'truly committed to European values but also favouring further deepening of the European integration process' (2013: 22). Nevertheless, as further noted, 'the paradox of the Polish foreign policy is that Poland is too weak to be a powerful actor on the international arena, but also too strong, considering the size and population of the new EU members, to agree on all conditions proposed by the EU and other organizations' (Kamińska 2007: 6). Poland has been one of the largest net recipients of previous and current EU budgets. Consequently,

there are some similarities between the Spanish and Polish positions within the EU as both countries do not have sufficient political and economic capacity to turn into one of the most influential EU Member States. According to Szczerbiak this ambiguous position is a result of 'tension between Poland's EU aspirations and capabilities together with its intergovernmentalist philosophy in theory and actual support for deeper integration in many areas in practice' (2012: 79). On the eve of its Presidency Poland was still searching for its place on the European stage. Borowski highlighted two possible conceptions for the European policy of Poland: the first one of Poland becoming one of the key big Member States or the second one of Poland opting for a position of a middle-size state acting as a 'speaker for the new Europe' (2010). The six-month term in the office of the Council Presidency might thus provide some clarification into Poland's European and foreign policy strategies.

8.2 Expectations Towards the Polish Presidency

The two-year period of the implementation of the LT brought some clarifications towards the Presidency's role; it was both the subject of more general institutional expectations towards the institution itself, as well as more particular expectations held towards the individual countries in the chair. In the case of Poland there were strong expectations of an active and leadership role in the area of Eastern Europe (research interviews). Thus, some of the interviewees indicated that Poland's performance might result in undermining the consolidation of the post-Lisbon system in favour of pursuing 'a more pre-Lisbon type of Presidency' (SGCa/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). This was particularly reflected in the responses of the interviewees based in the SGC and the EEAS. While the latter saw this as 'potential violations of the new system and attempts to undermined the EEAS's position in order to secure greater influence over the EU affairs' (HUa/07.2011), the former pointed to a 'potential cooperative relationship which might further clarify the post-Lisbon foreign policy making' (SGCa/05.2012). On one hand, some of the interviewees noted that this would be regarded as rather 'inappropriate behaviour', on the other hand Poland's leadership in the case of the EaP emerged 'rather naturally as a result of its previous entrepreneurship, extensive expertise and the approaching summit of the EaP' (GB/05.2012).

These expectations were even stronger on the international stage with countries of the EaP expecting Poland's engagement and involvement with reference to the substance of the EU project (UA/01.2012). Thus countries of the EaP and in particular Ukraine held

very high expectations towards Poland's term in office and the approaching summit, calling for 'natural sympathy' based on similar historical experiences (Mahoney 2011a). There was a clear expectation from the Polish as well as Ukrainian and to some extent European side that under the Polish chairmanship priority would be given to negotiations with Ukraine on the Association Agreement and that it might be even signed by the end of 2011 (SGCa/05.2012, GB/05.2012, UA/01.2012).

Poland was to face a set of ambivalent expectations which on one hand expected 'some sort of Polish leadership' (SGCa/05.2012) while on the other emphasised the post-Lisbon context of the Presidency. As mentioned above, on the eve of the Polish Presidency the scenario of the post-Lisbon Presidency in the area of foreign policy already existed and referred to following the leadership of the HRVP and acting as a deputy on her request. Poland however decided to take advantage of this newly established practice and negotiate the terms of this arrangement by agreeing to deputise for the HRVP in the indicated areas (PLg/01.2012). At a joint meeting held in May 2011 the HRVP and the Polish FM agreed how this division of labour would work under the Polish chairmanship of the Council. From the planned European agenda for the second half of 2011 presented by the HRVP Poland indicated the areas in which it would like to be more active, namely the EaP, Common Security Policy, and relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan (PLg/01.2012). These subjects had been generally known as not of any particular interest to the HRVP, however such an arrangement was still perceived as a rather sensitive issue as Poland's performance might undermine the new post-Lisbon system through setting a precedent of exercising a more nationally-motivated deputisation of the HRVP (SGCb/05.2012). One of the key factors enabling this arrangement were good working relations between the HRVP and Polish FM Sikorski, which to a large extent enabled Poland's expectations to play a more active role to be accommodated (SGCa/05.2012, EPc/05.2012). Consequently, this agreement allowed Poland to escape any subsequent accusation of undermining the newly established institutional setting; on the contrary, the close cooperation with the HRVP was seen as a clear indication of support for the new context of EU foreign policy making. Poland managed to formalise some of the expectations and place itself in a privileged position vis-à-vis other Member States securing access to the HRVP as her deputy and thus to the EEAS's agenda and its resources.

Pre-Presidency's Functions	The Rotating Presidency	The High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission	The President of the EC
Organisational Management	Low	High	Moderate
Neutral Brokering	Low	High	Moderate
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	High	High
External and Internal Representation	Low	High	High

Table 8. The Overview of Expectations Towards the Post-Lisbon Functions Second Half of 2011 (Author's Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

8.3 Towards the Role Preference of the Polish Presidency

Poland was the first country of the second post-Lisbon Presidency Trio along with Denmark and Cyprus. The joint programme setting a working agenda for the following 18 months acknowledged the new post-Lisbon context by emphasising the close cooperation with the European actors as well as using 'to the full all possibilities the Lisbon Treaty offers' (CEU 2011d: 7). Therefore, the new system was not only seen as a constraint for the Presidency's performance, but also an opportunity for establishing close cooperation of all involved actors. One of the main objectives would be management of the ongoing economic crisis and thus the EU economic governance was expected to continue dominating the European agenda (GB/05.2012). Nevertheless, maintaining and strengthening the EU global role featured as an area of 'high strategic importance' in the strategic framework of the Programme (CEU 2011d: 9). The subject of external relations was briefly mentioned in the last section of the operational programme and mostly referred to more Community-related policy areas, such as trade and development and more generally calling for development of the EU global role. The programme included a note explaining that it was prepared without input from the HRVP. The Presidency Trio's countries issued a formal request to the HRVP's cabinet asking for coordination

of working agendas, however the EEAS refused to contribute due to lack of operational capacity to provide 'such a long-term strategic planning with reference to EU foreign policy' (EEASa/04.2012). One of the Polish officials admitted that it was a clear indication that the EEAS and the HRVP 'wanted to maintain the full leadership and management over this policy area limiting the role and engagement of the Presidency to minimum' (PLg/01.2012). This was in contrast to the Polish strategy which aimed for a more active performance on the European stage, also with reference to external relations and in particular the areas of strategic national importance - the Eastern dimension of the ENP (PLg/01.2012). Poland was thus aiming to adjust the 'supporting Presidency' scenario to enable its more active performance as well as influencing the EU agenda according to national preferences (Ibid.).

It became clear that in order for the Polish Presidency to be able to achieve any of the set priorities relating to EU foreign policy it needed to secure the EEAS's support and trust that such cooperation could be beneficial on both sides and that it would not result in diminishing the role of the EEAS; thus the cooperation between the Polish officials and the HR intensified (PLa/04.2012). Poland was gathering additional support for its agenda by touring European capitals and consulting the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET). The main aim was to convince Member States and European actors that Poland would hold its Presidency in full support of the new institutional set up limiting the official role of the Presidency; however, still leaving some manoeuvring space to engage in promotion of some of the policy areas (ESc/12.2010, GB/05.2012, PLa/04.2012).

This approach was also reflected in the decision not to continue the practice set by the previous Presidency Trio to have a single logo for all three Presidencies. Instead Poland's logo was designed by one of the most famous Polish artists Jerzy Janiszewski who had designed the well-known 'Solidarność' logo, now one of the most known historic symbols of the Polish struggle towards freedom and democracy. Therefore, the Polish government wanted the Presidency's logo to refer directly to this tradition and as stated by PM Tusk 'it will be quite symbolic and adequate to the significance of Poland holding its first EU Presidency' (Polish Presidency 2011b). This was perceived as an indication of Poland's efforts towards its Presidency but also that Poland would be much more assertive, active and ambitious than the rest of the Trio's members

(SGCa/05.2012). This was further reinforced by the official programme of the Polish Presidency.

8.3.1 Official Programme of the Polish Presidency

The strategic framework of the Polish Programme focused on three main areas: *European Integration as a Source of Growth, Secure Europe's Food, Energy, Defence and Europe Benefitting from Openness*. Even though the economic governance and the approaching negotiations of the EU's seven-year budget were among the first priorities identified by Poland; two of the main strategic objectives referred to EU external relations. Highlighting that 'Europe also needs to focus more on the international situation' the focus was placed on the EU relations with its neighbours (Polish Presidency 2011a: 5). By emphasising the interplay between various policy areas under the Presidency's management and the European actors, for example energy and the ENP Poland aimed to place itself in the centre of the decision making process without undermining the post-Lisbon context (GB/05.2012). This was done by emphasising the external dimensions of policy areas still under the Presidency's management and chairmanship, for example mobility issues, transport, and energy frameworks with reference to cooperation within the ENP. In terms of the EaP it was clearly stated that the Presidency would aim 'to conclude Association Agreements (...) (by finalising or making substantial progress in its negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova), make progress in the process of visa liberalisation and deepen sectorial cooperation' (Polish Presidency 2011a: 10). The approaching summit was seen as a potential factor enabling 'further impetus for the EaP's continued development' (Ibid.). Furthermore, the same emphasis was put on the Southern dimension of the ENP, as the Presidency would strive to 'initiate cooperation based on partnership, focused on supporting democratic transformations, building modern state structures' with the countries of this region (Ibid.). This was however to be undertaken within the new institutional settings and thus ensure further practical implementation of the LT (Polish Presidency 2011a: 5). Pointing to both dimensions of the ENP was aimed at providing a 'more European approach, however the particular national flavour was very distinctive also with prioritising the subject of the EU-Russia relations' (SGCa/05.2012).

In the operational part, the working agenda for the FAC featured already under the second sections, thus demonstrating the importance of this policy area for Poland and its Presidency (GB/05.2012). Expressing support for the post-Lisbon arrangements Poland

set itself the goal of ensuring coordination of various policy areas and subjects in external relations. Referring to the priorities under the term of 'EU external relations', it aimed at presenting a more comprehensive approach towards EU foreign policy and thus justifying the role for the Presidency (PLa/04.2012). The issues of the development, humanitarian and trade policies were presented as the main areas under the Presidency's management (Polish Presidency 2011a: 14). Poland's performance would be pursued in the cooperation with the post-Lisbon actors, the HRVP, EEAS and POTEK as well as the EP; it was clearly noted that the latter institution now plays a significant role as it 'has been vested with significant powers in the area of EU external relations under the Lisbon Treaty' (Ibid.). Finally with reference to relationship with the HRVP and EEAS it was emphasised that the Presidency would support these actors 'in particular in matters relating to the stability, democratisation and development of the EU neighbourhood, as well as issues pertaining to the development of the CFSP' (Ibid.). Furthermore, by prioritising the implementation of the ENP, upgrading cooperation with the EaP countries both in political and economic terms the Programme clearly presented the Polish national preference for its six-month term in office.

8.3.2 Role Preference – the Domestic, European and International Context

Poland started its preparations well in advance and from the very beginning it was declaring that one of the key priorities would be the EaP and keeping the issue high on the EU agenda (PLa/04.2012). Even though the preceding Presidencies were moving the institution of the Presidency further from exerting any leadership, Poland was vividly declaring that there was still a space on the European stage for the Member State in the chairmanship of the EU Council to actively take part in European foreign policy making. Simultaneously Poland was expressing the view that this should be done through close cooperation with the POTEK, the HR and EEAS without challenging and undermining their positions. As stated by a Polish official: 'The Presidency has not disappeared. There is still a role for us; you just need to know how to do this. If you get the HRVP on board of your agenda and secure agreement in advance you can still play an active role, particularly in the areas which are not of traditional HRVP's interests' (PLi/05.2012). Thus, Poland spotted an opportunity for negotiating the terms of deputising the HR. The same official stated that '(the HRVP) needs a deputy and MEPs do not want to talk to EEAS, they want somebody of relevant political importance (...) she needs us [Member States] and we need her – with the right division of labour this is a

win-win situation' (Ibid.). Thus, the need for deputisation of the HRVP emerged as a key factor enabling the Presidency's performance in EU foreign affairs.

As argued before, Poland was able to manage, to some extent, expectations towards its role as the Presidency. The extensive cooperation between the HRVP and Polish FM, as well as ensuring the support of the EP, enabled Poland 'to escape accusations of undermining the post-Lisbon system' and rather presented it as 'a opportunity for pursuing jointly with the HRVP and EEAS particular priorities' (PLi/05.2012). Furthermore, upon the inauguration of the Polish Presidency FM Sikorski confirmed his support for the HRVP by publicly pledging to be 'a loyal deputy' (Euractiv 02.07.2011). This was practically demonstrated by not commenting on the subject of possible support for Palestine with reference to the UN membership bid; as stated by Sikorski: 'We [EU FMs] have agreed to withhold our national positions to help Cathy Ashton reach a consensus. There is a need for the EU to speak on this with one voice' (Ibid.). Therefore, the pursuit of the particular role preference was preceded by a period of extensive preparations focusing on managing expectations towards its Presidency. This was used by Poland to project their own understanding of its role as the Council chairmanship with reference to European and international partners. It can be argued that Poland managed to some extent to create expectations towards its Presidency as well as to ensure that these were reflected at the European level; thus adjusting the post-Lisbon Presidency's functional scope.

Such an approach was enabled by the thus far constructive engagement of Poland in establishing the EU policy towards its Eastern neighbours and by the particular expertise in this field. This was further affected by the sound economic situation of Poland, as it was the only country in the EU recording economic growth amid the ongoing economic crisis.¹⁰⁹ The stable political situation was expected to be maintained even though the Polish government agreed to schedule parliamentary elections during its Presidency (SGCa/05.2012). This decision was criticised at both domestic and European levels as the continuity of the Polish Presidency could have been endangered (Szczerki 2011) as it was in the case of the Czech Presidency in 2009. According to the opinion polls the Civic Platform was steadily leading and thus it was expected to win elections and continue the Presidency's management administration with minimal changes

¹⁰⁹ In 2009 the Polish growth rate was recorded at the level of 1.6 %; while the EU average was -4.2 %. It continued to grow in 2010 and 2011.

(PLa/04.2012). On the other hand, the Polish government expected that a successful Presidency would further boost its election results (Ibid.).

The international situation, in particular the deteriorating situation in Belarus and the Arab Spring events in North Africa, were expected to have a considerable effect on the Polish Presidency and its original plans as it would be the Southern dimension, rather than the Eastern one that would dominate the EU working agenda. Moreover, as the situation in the rest of the EaP countries was deteriorating in terms of democratic standards and their further integration with the EU stopped being a priority for the national authorities, North Africa actually started to look more promising and open for EU initiatives (research interviews). On the other hand, even though the international agenda drew the focus away from Eastern Europe, this particular context also helped to keep the overall issue of the ENP high on the agenda. The Member States and European actors admitted that the EU approach followed thus far had failed and needed to be reviewed as presented in the 'renewed approach for the ENP' in May 2011. Thus, Poland used this attention and focused its strategy on promotion of a more efficient and ambitious policy which should provide a balanced support for both dimensions of the ENP (GB/05.2012). This would also help to portray Poland as 'more of neutral brokering' thus expanding its traditional focus from the East towards the entire ENP (Ibid.).

Poland set itself high expectations which were result of both its performance thus far within the EU, in particular with reference to Eastern Europe, and its very favourable domestic political and economic situation (Kucharczyk and Łada 2013). As argued by the authors, as a relatively big country, with the government efficiently operating on the European scene, Poland was also expected to go beyond the day-to-day administration of the Union and become a model of the division of competences between the rotating Presidency and the new post Lisbon institutions of POTEK, HRVP and EEAS. A more lasting applicability of such a model would be definitely appealing to big Member States (EPc/05.2012); however this would also depend on the overall assessment of Poland's performance.

8.4 Polish Presidency in Office – Role Enactment

The Polish Presidency had been preceded by intensive preparations which had started three years in advance; these not only focused on preparation of the Presidency's programme, extensive training and intensive cooperation with European institutions and

Member States, but also on introducing more structural changes in management of European affairs at the national level. Placing the MFA in charge of the overall management of EU affairs was supposed to ensure more effective policy making and cooperation at the European level (PLa/04.2012).¹¹⁰ This stage of preparations culminated with the Polish REPER moving to the new headquarters in the very centre of Brussels in May 2011. The opening ceremony was attended by both President of the Commission¹¹¹ and POTE¹¹². Poland's performance in the area of external affairs was part of a wider Presidency strategy aiming for not only a standard membership test for the Polish administration, but also a test of its leadership on the European stage as one of the heavy-weight Member States. Thus, performing as a loyal deputy of the HRVP and ensuring efficient functioning of the post-Lisbon foreign policy making was as important as demonstrating leadership capacity on the substance of this policy.

8.4.1 Organisational Management

The experience of the Hungarian Presidency became crucial for arranging continuation of the bilateral working arrangements between the EEAS and the Presidency. From March 2011 onwards the Polish team was taking part in weekly coordination meetings between the Hungarian Presidency and EEAS initiated by SGC (SGCa/05.2012). This enabled Poland to observe and clarify some of the EEAS's expectations towards the emerging working relations as well as establish contact at the working levels (PLa/04.2012). By the end of the Hungarian Presidency all of the WGs dealing with foreign affairs were under the EEAS's chairmanship and it was the EEAS's representatives that emerged as the main agenda setter and organiser of these groups' proceedings. At the level of WGs the Presidency's role was limited to chairing the FAC configurations on trade and development. However, these two have been to a large extent dominated by the Commission and its working agenda; for example the Polish team was responsible for facilitating the adoption of the joint position of the EU, based on the Commission's proposal, for the 8th ministerial conference of WTO during the FAC (trade) on December 14, 2011. Polish officials did not have any influence on the substance of the proposal. Thus, overall the Presidency's direct leadership at the level of

¹¹⁰ See also Copsey and Pomorska 2010.

¹¹¹ COM (2011b) 'Speech by President Barroso at the opening ceremony of the Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU', 23.03.2011, Brussels.

¹¹² CEU (2011e) 'Speech of Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council at the opening of the new Polish permanent representation', 23.05.2011, Brussels.

WGs was limited and mostly associated with informal activities to a large extent focused on the EaP and its various components.

In order to compensate for the decreasing direct influence Poland aimed to access the meetings' agendas in a more informal manner by establishing close coordination and working relations with the EEAS's chairs (PLa/04.2012). However, such an informal approach was not always effective as the EEAS's representatives did not want to allow for establishing a precedent of a more active Presidency as this could have undermined the EEAS's position (EEASa/04.2012). The Polish Presidency also made a use of the few remaining formal resources, such as Gymnich meeting and chairmanship of Council's bodies, such as COREPER to ensure promotion of its priorities. Thus, Poland used COREPER II to compensate for its limited influence on the agenda and management of the WGs to pursue establishment of the EED (PLb/04.2012, PLh/05.2012). This will be further discussed in the section discussing agenda shaping of the Polish Presidency. Also the extensive pressure, but most of all the good personal relationship between the HRVP and the FM, ensured considerable influence on the agenda of the Gymnich meeting which was organised in Poland. Increasingly, for the country in the chair Gymnich meetings become one of the main mechanisms available for influencing the European agenda (ESc/12.2010, HUb/07.2011, PLh/05.2012). During most of the meetings chaired by the EEAS Poland took the floor in the national capacity and, compared to the previous Presidencies, in a much more assertive manner presented its national stance on issues of national importance (GB/05.2012, FR/05.2012, SGCb/05.2012). This might indicate that under the permanent chairmanship the country in the chair would increasingly act in a national, rather than European capacity. Consequently, the role of the Polish Presidency emerged not only because of the fragmented management and chairmanship over various external affairs, but also due to the particular preferences and considerable effort that Poland exercised towards negotiating its position and scope for action on the European stage.

8.4.2 External and Internal Representation

Poland was the first post-Lisbon Presidency to negotiate the scope for deputising the HRVP in the function of the EU external representative. Thus, the choice of venues during which Sikorski deputised the HRVP closely reflects the national preferences of Poland and its foreign policy's national role conception. The FM represented the EU during official visits in Afghanistan and Pakistan accompanied by the EEAS Coordinating

Director for Asia Viorel Isticioaia Budura (MFA PL 2011a). Poland acted in its EU capacity discussing bilateral relations, as well as in the national one discussing support for the democratisation of these countries.

In the area of development the Polish Presidency chaired the EU Delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Assembly EU-ACP in Lome (Togo, 21-23.11.2011) and hosted and co-organised with the Commission, the European Development Days in Warsaw (15-16.12.2011). The agenda of the latter reflected the Presidency's focus on democratisation policy and the ENP (PLa/04.2012). Finally, the Polish Presidency coordinated and represented the EU in the framework of the 4th High Level Forum on Effective Assistance (HLEA) in Busan (29.11-1.12.2011). Polish representatives were included as observers of the Sherpa Group whose responsibility was to prepare the final document of the Forum (MFA 2012: 141). However, the influence of the Polish Presidency was restricted due to the status of the observer as well as the general stance of the Commission which was reflected in the instructions prepared for the Polish team (SGCb/05.2012).

According to the division of labour between the HRVP and the FM the latter represented the EU in the areas which had been of national preference while at the lower level the Polish officials were acting in response to the HRVP and EEAS's requests (PLa/04.2012, 28). The latter was more frequent, often organised ad hoc and did not reflect Polish preferences (SGCa/05.2012). Therefore, while the FM represented the EU during his visits to Afghanistan and Pakistan, presenting a clear Polish initiative during its mission in Afghanistan, the Minister for European Affairs Dowgielewicz represented the HRVP in front of the European Parliament during the FAC briefings. For example on October 17 and 18, 2011 Minister Dowgielewicz took part in the EP's discussion on Libya, Syria and the peace process in the Middle East (MFA 2012: 235). Thus, at the higher political level the Polish Presidency was deputising the HRVP according to 'more or less' national indications, at the lower it was more accommodating to the HRVP's preferences (EEASa/04.2012).

8.4.3 Neutral Brokering

The assertive and national focus of the Polish Presidency was also reflected in the diminished role that Poland played in the function of neutral brokering. Compared with the previous Presidencies, in particular the Hungarian one, Poland did not continue the role of honest broker and advocate of the EEAS with reference to other Member States;

on the contrary in December 2011 the Polish FM co-signed a letter criticising the management of EU affairs thus far under the HRVP's leadership.¹¹³ It was argued that the letter was not meant as a personal criticism towards the HRVP, but rather a constructive proposal in the anticipation of the approaching review planned for mid-2013 (PLh/05.2012).

One of the rare instances of Poland's performing the function of brokering was achieving a solution with reference to the subject of the EU representation in international organisations. This was demonstrated when the UK mission to the United Nations blocked the EU from presenting shared positions due to the particular wording. British officials argued that statements should be issued as 'on behalf of the EU and its member states' rather than 'on behalf of the EU' (Borger 2011). Therefore, one of the more practical achievements in the area of EU external relations was the adoption of the agreement on delivering EU statements in international organisations which contributed to ending the period of ambiguity that largely harmed the EU's image on the international stage. Thus, the agreement clarified terms in which to apply the wording 'on the authority of the EU' and in which 'on the authority of the EU and Member States'; nevertheless the practical operationalization was to be followed.

In addition to this, it was argued that Poland, to some extent, acted as an honest broker with reference to the ENP; however these efforts were hindered by Poland's image as a strong representative of the Eastern neighbours. Therefore Polish attempts to revive and implement the EU democratisation policy were met with some suspicions from Member States (SGCa/05.2012). This was particularly visible with reference to the Polish initiative of establishing the EED and it will be further discussed in the subsequent section of this chapter. As demonstrated above, the Polish Presidency did not see the function of neutral brokering as one of its priorities. The original role preference focused on successful exercise of political leadership which will be the subject of the subsequent section.

¹¹³ The letter was co-signed by foreign affairs ministers of 12 EU member states (Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden). A copy of the letter is available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/afet/dv/201/201203/20120321_fmletter_en.pdf.

8.4.4 Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership

As argued earlier the Council chairmanship was not only a 'membership test' for Poland, but most importantly it was an opportunity to establish itself as a key player on the European stage. Thus, exercising political leadership in the area of foreign affairs was seen as a key factor to achieving the status of European decision maker along with France and Germany.

One of the most visible Polish initiatives was a speech delivered by FM Sikorski in Berlin on November 28, 2011 during which he called for further German leadership in the management of the ongoing crisis as well as the future of the EU.¹¹⁴ This was one of the most visible efforts to present Poland as an important Member State taking part in shaping the future of the EU (PLd/05.2012). The agenda shaping of the Polish Presidency will be further explored with reference to the Warsaw Declaration adopted on the occasion of the EaP summit, the substance of the EaP and finally the European Endowment for Democracy being a clear example of agenda setting.

8.4.4.1 Warsaw Declaration

The main priority of the Polish Presidency in the area of EU external relations was keeping the issue of the EaP high on the agenda in order to mobilise support for the September summit. This was supposed to be the highlight event of the whole Presidency. Under the priority of 'Europe Benefiting from Openness' the EaP was framed within the ENP and discussed alongside the Southern dimension. As the analysis will further demonstrate Poland used a few available procedural resources as well as managing to access additional resources through close cooperation and coordination with the HRVP and EEAS. The Gymnich summit took place in Poland on September 2 and 3, 2011. The agenda of this meeting was set as an outcome of the compromises between the HRVP, EEAS and the Polish Presidency (PLa/04.2012, EEASa/04.2012). In order to accommodate Polish requests the subject of the approaching EaP summit and the EED were included in the working agenda of the second day of the meeting. Comparing the participation of this summit to the first EaP summit held in Prague in 2009 the Warsaw Summit managed to gather the key heads of states from Member States as well as European actors. This could have been read as support not only for the project of the EaP,

¹¹⁴ The most famous part of the speech was a historical call by Sikorski: 'I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity' (Sikorski 2011).

but also for Poland and its Presidency (research interviews). This however did not translate into substantial outputs with reference to the substance of the policy.

The Warsaw Declaration was a result of a compromise as the Polish Presidency did not manage to include any substantial reference to the membership perspective for EaP countries. The only reference is acknowledgement of 'the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners and their commitment to build deep and sustainable democracy' (CEU 2011f). Also additional emphasis was put on 'the particular role for the EaP to support those who seek an ever closer relationship with the EU' (Ibid.). The reference to visa liberalisation can be seen as a partial success of the Polish officials as the further progress would be subjected to a technical decision based on meeting the specified conditions by the neighbouring countries. The original plans were to have a timeline set for 'a long term' perspective of the liberalisation process. The final wording refers to making the progress conditional 'in due course on a case-by-case basis' (CEU 2011f) and was claimed to be a result of Polish lobbying (PLa/04.2012, PLh/05.2012). The gradual 'creation of an economic area between the EU and partner countries' (CEU 2011f) was also perceived by a Polish official as a successful change of language to include reference to the possibility of gradual economic integration (PLa/04.2012). Nevertheless, there was still no reference to the possibility of full economic integration. The summit also resulted in some practical outcomes, for example a plan to establish an Academy of Public Administration (to be based in Warsaw) and open up the Erasmus programme for students from EaP countries (Ibid.).

The efforts towards adopting a joint declaration on Belarus failed, as the neighbouring countries refused to sign it. The declaration, signed only by the EU countries, condemned the democratic record of Belarus. Poland also planned to adopt a 'modernisation package' making further cooperation conditional on terms of a full amnesty for political prisoners, setting up talks with the opposition and holding parliamentary elections in line with international standards (PLh/05.2012). The failure to adopt a joint declaration was portrayed by the Polish opposition and international press as a failure of the Polish authorities and a lack of sufficient negotiations held before the summit.¹¹⁵ The issue of Belarus turned out to be particularly contentious as Belarussian FM Siarhiej Martynau refused to attend and the Belarusian Ambassador in Warsaw Viktor Gaisenak who was supposed to officially represent Belarus refused to participate during the sec-

¹¹⁵ See Euractiv (03.10.2011).

ond day of the summit. The Ambassador could not participate in all of the meetings due to his lower diplomatic rank vis-à-vis other diplomatic representatives and thus stated his reason as discrimination against the authorities in Minsk. Despite some Polish plans to allow President Lukashenka to attend the summit, he was not invited due to the EU-imposed visa sanctions (PLa/04.2012).

8.4.4.2 Eastern Partnership

The daily management of the EaP is based on the mixture of both technical and political decisions driving the legislative management of various policy portfolios. This is where the influence of the Polish Presidency can be noted in several areas. In the second part of 2011 decisions were taken on starting negotiations on DCFTA (free trade component of the Association Agreements) with Moldova and Georgia, and visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan (EEASa/04.2012, SGCb/05.2012). It is difficult to evaluate the influence of Poland in this case as these decisions should be based on the fulfilment of technical conditions. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged by some of the interviewees that Poland's pressure was the key in speeding up adoption of the negotiations mandate by the Council (EEASa/04.2012).

The Association Agreement with Ukraine, which was anticipated to be finalised under the Polish Presidency had been planned as the second key event of the Polish term in office. This failed due to Timoshenko's conviction, perceived in European capitals as an instance of politically motivated justice and designed to limit the potential political competition for the approaching parliamentary elections. The extensive efforts of the Polish Presidency were twofold. First all, the visits of the Polish President in August 2011 and then in November 2011, and a joint visit of Polish and Swedish FMs, also in November 2011, were supposed to convince the Ukrainian President to release Timoshenko from her sentence.¹¹⁶ Secondly, the extensive lobbying within the EU resulted in the compromise solution of announcing the finalising of the negotiations during the December EU-Ukraine summit and making the initialling conditional on future political developments in Ukraine (Rzeczpospolita 19.12.2011).

¹¹⁶ There were two main ideas –changing the Ukrainian law and removing the prosecution on the grounds of political responsibility or on the basis of the poor health conditions of Timoshenko. Neither of these was agreed on by the Ukrainian President (ESa/12.2010, BEa/03.2011).

8.4.4.3 European Endowment for Democracy

The idea of the EED emerged in the aftermath of the events in Belarus in December 2010 when the opposition marched the streets in an attempt to protest against the manipulation and forging of the results of the presidential elections. The lack of effectiveness of the approach implemented thus far towards the Belarusian authoritarians and the lack of effective channels of support for the opposition triggered a discussion at the Polish MFA on other potential means of handling the situation (PLb/04.2012, PLd/05.2012, PLh/05.2012). The idea of an endowment fund, based on the example of the US National Endowment for Democracy, of which Poland had been one of the main beneficiaries during its democratic struggle in the 1980s, emerged as one of the ideas to enable the EU take a more flexible approach towards the countries experiencing democratic aspirations under authoritarian regimes. FM Sikorski officially presented the idea at the FAC in January 2011. The general idea of setting up a more flexible and rapid instrument was met with considerable interest from Member States and thus the Polish government decided to add it to its Presidency's agenda (PLa/04.2012).

Poland used other European actors to put the EED on the European agenda by framing the issue within the two major ongoing debates: the external instruments in favour of democratisation and the review of the ENP. This was done through Polish MEPs at the EP.¹¹⁷ In May 2011 the Commission and the HRVP issued a joint communication on the review of the ENP which supported the establishment of the EED as a part of a new more effective EU approach in its democracy support. This allowed for placing the issue on the agenda of the other European actors thus using their political position and resources to promote the idea. This also resulted in fleshing out the general idea of setting a flexible and quick source of funding for actors involved in democracy promotion outside the EU with more details and substance.¹¹⁸ However, with the constant pressure put by the Polish officials throughout its Presidency the issue managed to be kept high on

¹¹⁷ The Polish MEP Andrzej Grzyb introduced the EED to the EP resolution of 7 July 2011 on EU external policies in favour of democratisation (2011/2032(INI)) and Marek Siwiec added it to the European Parliament resolution of 14 December 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2011/2157(INI)).

¹¹⁸ This was particularly visible in the case of the EP, which decided to draft a report on the modalities for the possible establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (2011/2245(INI)). During the process of drafting the report numerous consultations were organised with various stakeholders to identify the most appropriate institutional design of the EED and its operating arrangements. Additionally, staff involved in this process provided some expertise which was used in the subsequent process of setting up the EED in 2012.

the agenda, but on the other hand this strengthened the perception of the EED being a Polish pet project thus referring to national preferences (EEASa/04.2012).

Poland also employed considerable national resources supporting the promotion of the EED. In June 2011 Poland presented the EED's operational and institutional arrangements in the form of legal expertise. It was commissioned externally by the Polish MFA and it envisaged the legal foundations of the EED as the basis of an international convention. The proposal was handed over to the EEAS which was to continue working out the details (PLb/04.2012, 24). Having the support of the Commission and the HR allowed for a wider promotion of the project. The EED was mentioned in several speeches by the Commissioner Füle and the HRVP Ashton as an important component of the reviewed approach within the ENP. However both of them referred to the general idea of the EED and never elaborated on the substance of the EED. This was left to the EEAS, which in cooperation with the Commission DG Development and Cooperation EuropeAid organised several consultations with civil societies, political foundations and think tanks to explore their experience. This also enabled to accommodate the expectations of a variety of stakeholders involved in democracy promotion. Poland also managed to make use of its high-profile Poles working both in the Commission and the EEAS whose strong emphasis on moving the project forward gave the EED an important impetus for advancing the works (EEASa/04.2012, EEASb/06.2012).

Poland also used the spotlight generated by its Presidency to hold various seminars, meetings and consultations on the subjects that were particularly important for the Presidency. Most of these events were devoted to the issue of the ENP and its renewed approach. One of the most important events was the European Development Days held in December in Warsaw, which Poland decided to use to discuss the EED with stakeholders from neighbouring countries. The subject of the ENP and EED was thus presented and kept high on the agenda through the whole six-month period. The extensive discussion enabled Poland not only to gather support for the initiative but also to elaborate comments on the potential institutional set up and working arrangements of the EED. Even though the general idea was welcomed by most of the Member States some serious concerns were raised as far as the legal choice of the international convention was concerned (PLh/05.2012). Moreover, some of the Member States expressed their firm opposition to the EED's ability to support the fledgling political parties in targeted countries (FR/05.2012). The information supplied by the EEAS on the EED was re-

garded by the representatives present at the meeting as too general and lacking concrete details on how the EED would work (research interviews). This caused a perception of Poland's rushing the decision without having necessary details worked out and without securing support from all of Member States (EEASb/06.2012).

Realising that the EED had become a very complex and contentious issue Poland adjusted its original aim of having the EED established before the end of 2011 and decided rather to aim for a more general political declaration. The declaration would present a general support for the idea and more concrete details would follow in the course of 2012. Nevertheless, even having some general agreement on the EED proved difficult. After some pre-meeting announcements the declaration failed to be adopted at the FAC on December 1, 2011; instead the EED was only mentioned in the Council conclusions.¹¹⁹ Running out of time, Poland used one of the last venues available for the Presidency and put the subject of the EED's declaration on the agenda of the December's meeting of COREPER II (PLa/04.2012, PLh/05.2012). The declaration was placed first on the agenda of the ANTICI's meeting and then adopted at the subsequent COREPER II meeting on December 16, 2011 (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, the final outcome as presented in the declaration presents a lack of ability of the Polish Presidency to settle contentious issues. In an attempt to secure the support of all of the Member States and thus having the declaration adopted before the end of its term in office Poland agreed to give all representatives to be present in the decision making body of the EED voting rights regardless of their financial contribution. The institutional set up of a private foundation was another concession from the Polish side.¹²⁰ Therefore, as has been argued in the academic literature, Member States often rush the initiatives through in order to secure some tangible results in order to declare their Presidencies effective and successful. Such rushed solutions might not present the most appropriate and effective compromises, as in case of the above-mentioned example, where Poland gave up the only source of possible funding for the EED. Consequently, the Presidency increased Poland's capacity to place its initiative onto the European agenda; however it also restrained Poland's negotiating capacity to achieve an outcome close to its original preferences.

¹¹⁹ See Council conclusions on the European Endowment for Democracy 3130th FAC, 1.12.2011, Brussels.

¹²⁰ See Declaration on the Establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (CEU 2011g).

8.5 Role Assessment

After the initial period of membership Poland started to perceive European foreign policy as an additional venue for its national interests. The six-month term in office enabled the Polish administration to gain intensive experience of post-Lisbon European foreign policy making. With reference to the downloading dimension Poland understood that in order to secure any advancement of its national priorities it needed to play according to the already established rules, in this particular context rules referring to the Presidency's role vis-à-vis the new post-Lisbon institutional architecture. Poland decided to use its term in office to upload a more active scenario for the Presidency's chairmanship. The emphasis on communicating support for both the HRVP and EEAS was aimed at portraying Poland as acting according to the established rules for the 'supporting Presidency' scenario thus securing the perception of acting according to both formal and informal rules, and expectations from other Member States and European institutions. Thus Poland kept on balancing between its ambitions to secure some tangible outputs and not be accused of undermining the emerging post-Lisbon system.

On the eve of the Presidency one of the Polish MEPs, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski noted that Poland may 'set the pattern of how far a Lisbon Treaty Presidency can go' (Euractiv 07.06.2011). In addition to this, FIIA expert Tiia Lehtonen summarised the Presidency as 'Poland on the way to the club of heavyweight EU members' (FIIA 2011). All of the think tanks' interviewees agreed on the positive assessment as well as the significance of the Presidency for Poland. Both CEPS and EPC's representatives argued that Poland has managed to put itself on the map as a large influential European country, 'fully assured of its role within the EU' (CEPS/01.2012, EPC/01.2012). Furthermore, when asked about the area of the greatest contribution of the Polish Presidency a researcher at Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung pointed to Poland, as 'the first big Member State to hold the Presidency after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty', being able to solve a series of problems, such as finding the role for the PM of the country in the chair and accommodating the increasingly powerful position of the EP' (HBS/01.2012). Finally, another CEPS representative pointed to Poland's contribution towards 'normalisation' of the system, as different actors have a better idea of what their respective roles are' (CEPS/01.2012). Therefore, it seems that the alternative scenario for the post-Lisbon Presidency as performed by Poland resulted not only in a positive assessment but also in upgrading Poland's position on the European stage. As noted above, Poland's perfor-

mance was assessed positively by European actors. Firstly, the HRVP issued an official letter which 'highlighted the high quality of Polish Presidency, including the extraordinary commitment of Poland and the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs to actions supporting the High Representative' (MFA 2012: 41). The EP's President Martin Schulz stated that the Presidency was 'without a doubt one of the very best Presidencies we have had' (Euractiv 14.12.2011). This was further acknowledged by the President of the Commission Barroso who emphasised the 'extraordinary capacity [during] probably the most difficult period since the European integration started' (Ibid.). This was mostly affected by the Polish active stance on ensuring unity of EU Member States divided among the lines of being members of the Eurozone (SGCa/05.2012, EEASa/04.2012). Therefore, the overall positive image of the Polish performance enabled it to play a more active role in the areas of external relations, and thus informally expanding the existing scenario to include not only institutional entrepreneurship and indirect agenda shaping but also direct agenda setting with reference to the EED. Yet, as demonstrated above, the influence of the post-Lisbon Presidency should not be overstated as it depends on the complex interaction of a number of actors working within the extensive framework of EU foreign affairs.

Presidency's functions	Role expectations towards the post-Lisbon Presidency	Role expectations towards the Polish Presidency	Role preference
Organisational Management	Low	Low	Low (high only in areas of national preferences)
Neutral Brokering	Low	Low	Low
Policy Entrepreneurship/Political Leadership	Low	High (mostly in areas of national preferences)	High
External and Internal Representation	Low	Moderate	Moderate (mostly in areas of national preferences)

Table 9. The Overview of Role Expectations and Role Preference of the Polish Presidency (Author's Own Compilation Based on the Analysis of the Interviews)

8.6 Role Institutionalisation under the Polish Leadership – Towards Role Prescription

The Polish Presidency further demonstrated the continuation of the emerging post-Lisbon trend with general expectations towards the institution itself and the individual Member States in the chair. Thus, particular expectations based on Poland due to its membership thus far and its expertise empowered the Polish Presidency to play a more active role with reference to the Eastern dimension of the ENP. This was a clear illustration of the Polish role conceptions of both its foreign policy and its European membership strategy. As noted by Bunse and Klein 'Polish Presidency demonstrated that national presidencies can revive the visibility and activism even in the foreign policy realm if the country in the chair works in close cooperation with the new more permanent EU institutions' (2014: 90). Poland's particular emphasis on exercising political leadership during its Council chairmanship resulted in its pursuing a different role preference of not only a more active, but also more assertive role in EU external relations. The particular role making of Poland enabled the functional scope for the Presidency's role to expand. Adjusting the scenario introduced by the Belgian Presidency, and followed by the Hungarian Presidency, Poland decided to use the already established practice of HRVP's deputisation to negotiate terms of the Polish Presidency's performance in the area of foreign affairs. It can be argued that Poland, after the Belgian Presidency, was one of the institutional entrepreneurs as its performance demonstrated features of active role making. Through enactment of its role preference Poland established itself and thus the institution of the Presidency at that time in a more privileged position vis-à-vis other Member States, demonstrating role playing with the already established practice of the supportive Presidency. Therefore, the uploading dimension of the Polish Presidency not only refers to agenda shaping of national priorities and securing outcomes close to national preferences, but also to the design of the emerging post-Lisbon institutional system of foreign policy making through its deliberate role making. The strategy was not always successful as the cooperation with both HRVP and EEAS became challenging. It was in particular the case of the emerging EEAS which anticipated its role to be challenged by the active Polish Presidency and thus aiming at 'limiting the potential political role of the Polish Presidency' and ensuring continuation of the more functional scenario introduced by the Belgian and followed by the Hungarian Presidencies (HUB/07.2011). Furthermore, it also shows that the Member State in the chair is capable to some extent of negotiating its role through deliberate role making. This can

be done by using remaining limited resources and indirectly accessing the WGs agenda through cooperation and coordination with the EEAS. Yet this is highly dependent on the particular personalities of the EEAS's representatives and how they conceptualise their roles. Finally, the Euro-enthusiastic Presidency combined with the sound economic and stable domestic situation enabled Poland to maximise its capacity at both the working level in Brussels and the political level in Warsaw towards the Presidency which shifted Poland into 'a higher political level within the EU' (SGCa/05.2012).

This alternative scenario as proposed by Poland, a supporting yet political Presidency has not been formally institutionalised, but it might have a more lasting effect on the emerging post-Lisbon system. Poland managed to set a precedent for a more active and influential Presidency pursued within the limits of the post-Lisbon context (HUd/07.2011, HUf/07.2011). Officials from both the Commission and EEAS suggested that such behaviour 'might be on the brink of violation of the Presidency's neutrality' (HUb/07.2011, HUd/07.2011). Nevertheless, some of the Member States' officials agreed that Member States having expertise in particular policy areas might be perceived as 'legitimate to play a more active role if they are able to contribute something substantial to EU foreign policy' (ESc/12.2010). This should be done with close cooperation and coordination with the HRVP and other European actors (Ibid.). Consequently, this would indicate that it is rather the nature of the post-Lisbon foreign policy rather than the institution of the Presidency that entitles Member States to contribute to common EU foreign policy.

CHAPTER IX Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to examine the role and the inter-institutional position of the CEU Presidency in the area of EU foreign policy in the post-Lisbon context. The provisions of the LT transferred management of EU foreign affairs from the level of the Member State to the level of newly established European institutions, namely the PO-TEC and the HRVP. However, with rather generally envisaged provisions, the LT failed to introduce a clear scenario for post-Lisbon European foreign policy making, and left this to be worked out in practical terms during the implementation phase. The primary focus of this research was on the informal adaptation of the LT's formal provisions regarding the position and functions of the Presidency in this particular policy area. The first objective was to provide a better understanding of the position of the Presidency within the inter-institutional relations in the area of European foreign policy in the aftermath of the critical juncture by exploring its subsequent institutionalisation. Secondly, the extent to which the process of role institutionalisation is a consequence of the implementation of the formal provisions of the LT, and the extent to which it is purposely shaped by involved actors. The actors become the implementing agents who are in the position to clarify the created ambiguous institutional set up in due course of the implementation of the provisions and the emerging system. This required the opening of 'the black box' of the institutional change at the point of critical juncture, and examining the Presidency at the very moment of the institutional change. This study sought to answer three research questions:

To what extent is the process of role institutionalisation based on the previous role of the pre-Lisbon Presidency (previous functions as well as the existence of pre-Lisbon intra role conflicts between agenda shaping and neutral brokering), on the institutional feedback emerging from the fledgling system, and on the particular role making of the Member State in the chair (role preference and role enactment)?

To what extent is the preference held by the Member States towards its time in the office (role preference) guided by informal expectations held by other involved actors, the national role conceptions of the countries with reference to its foreign and European policies, and the role assessment of the previous presidencies' performance (role assessment)?

What is the capacity of the country in the chair to project its individual role preference to the structural level and shaping the role prescription of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy (role making)? What are the key factors affecting this capacity for role making?

To explore the institution of the Presidency during its institutional change, this thesis put forward an analytical framework combining institutionalist and role-based insights which allow studying the institutional change as a constitutive process of mechanisms at the agential level, the role making of individual countries in the chair, and the structural level of the institutional feedback stemming from the emerging post-Lisbon European foreign policy making system. The model of the Presidency's role institutionalisation aims to capture the agency-structure relationship as well as integrate previously identified factors which further affect the Presidency's performance. Finally, drawing on previous research on the variations between individual Presidencies, this project applied a role-based concept of national role conception to explain conceptualisation of the Presidency's role and functions by individual Member States. The final result, the framework exploring the process of the Presidency's role institutionalisation post-Lisbon, allows for a more comprehensive and in-depth explanation of the studied phenomenon based on the example of the first four post-Lisbon presidencies held by Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland.

9.1 Comparing the Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies: The EU Council Presidency at the Critical Juncture

Firstly, the analysis of the Lisbon Treaty clearly points to the lack of a clear role prescription of the post-Lisbon Presidency in EU foreign policy making. As argued by Fernández, '(...) the significance of the Presidency for the Member States has varied throughout the process of European integration in accordance with the transformation of this institution and that such transformation has been driven by the institutional decisions taken by the countries at critical points in the history of European construction' (2008a: 25). The LT created such a critical point that would affect the Presidency's role and position according to both formal and informal institutional decisions. The original decision to remove the Presidency from the post-Lisbon Presidency has been limited by the functional demands created by the emerging post-Lisbon system. Thus, the first Member States in the chair were still to play a role. Yet, it was not clear what kind of role it should be. The comparative analysis of these four individual Presidencies makes

it possible to trace the subsequent Presidency's role institutionalisation as a result of the particular role making by Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland both constrained and empowered by the emerging system of the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making. Therefore, the Presidency's performance was to a large extent conditioned by the lack of fully operational system which produced further functional expectations towards it. Firstly, the Presidency was expected to take over the chairmanship of the WGs associated with the foreign affairs until the HRVP would be able to nominate permanent EEAS's chairmanship. In more general terms, the HRVP's 'impossible job description' (Euractiv 10.12.2009) triggered the functional expectation towards the Presidency to ensure the HRVP's deputisation and functional support. Secondly, this created further expectations towards the Presidency to perform functions not only of an organisational manager, but also of an external and internal representative of the CEU and the EU, and finally of a neutral broker. The latter function informally expanded to ensure a channel of communication between Member States and the HRVP, and later the EEAS. This, as in the case of Belgium and Hungary, was also in focus with reference to the management of the EU affairs, and on mediating between different visions of the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making. Thirdly, maintaining of the Presidency's role in some policy areas, for example trade and development, as well as regarding some Council's preparatory bodies, namely COREPER II, ensured the Presidency's role in the overall coordination of the EU external action. Therefore, due to emerging functional expectations, the Presidency has also become responsible for ensuring coherence and consistency of EU foreign policy during its six-month period.

These emerging informal expectations, being the results of the functional requirements that have stemmed from the emerging post-Lisbon system, created an opportunity for the Presidency to play a more active role. However, it was up to individual Member States in the chair to decide how they would address this opportunity. The lack of a clear role prescription enabled individual countries, Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland to pursue their own visions towards their role while in the chair of the Council. This comparative analysis also demonstrates how different countries in the chair emphasised different functions according to their particular role conceptions in European and foreign policies. The latter was also affected by informal expectations expressed towards individual countries; Belgium's original role preference focused on ensuring a functional scenario with the Presidency ensuring a supporting role towards the new ac-

tors, while Spain and Poland decided to include policy entrepreneurship and agenda shaping in their role preferences. Both Spain and Poland, medium-sized countries with particular national interest in EU foreign policy took advantage of the lack of the clear scenario and took on the role of political leaders with reference to the ENP. Such an interpretation of the Presidency's role was different in these two cases. Spain was generally criticised, and at the same time excused by the lack of fully operational post-Lisbon system, for overstepping the boundaries of the post-Lisbon provisions and exercising the 'pre-Lisbon Presidency'. In the case of Poland the role assessment was more ambivalent as on the one hand its policy entrepreneurship with reference to the EaP and the EED in particular was perceived as 'bordering on the post-Lisbon scenario', and on the other hand, it was praised for its effective, enthusiastic and pro-European performance. This might indicate that the post-Lisbon institution of the Presidency might continue its pre-Lisbon role ambiguity and thus allow individual Member States some leeway in their interpretation of their role in the chair of the CEU chairmanship.

However, as demonstrated by these two examples, the entrepreneurial role of the Presidency needs to be performed in the framework of 'the HRVP's deputisation' ensuring agreement on the particular division of labour in the pre-Presidency period. Finally, policy entrepreneurship has been to a large extent limited by the permanent management exercised by the POTEK, HRVP and EEAS, and thus created a strong expectation towards the Presidency that any agenda shaping needs to be ensured through extensive coordination and cooperation with the European institutions. This thesis presented some preliminary insights into the post-Lisbon Presidency's nature of agenda shaping, but further research is needed to explore whether the Polish Presidency's policy entrepreneurship capacity was enabled by the transitional character of its Presidency or whether it would become a more permanent feature of the Presidency's portfolio. Finally, the example of Hungary illustrated the importance of the domestic political situation as well as the ideological stance of the government as intervening variables affecting both the Presidency's role preference and its subsequent behaviour while in the chair.

Overall, this thesis concludes with several findings to suggest that the post-Lisbon Presidency has continued with some of the pre-Lisbon institutionalisation patterns. Firstly, the post-Lisbon Presidency can be still characterised as a complex role set combining formal and informal functions. Secondly, this informal scope makes the Presidency more dependent on the particular role preferences held by the individual countries in the

chair. Thirdly, the process of role institutionalisation illustrated the interactive process of the structure-based factor (the institutional feedback) and agent-based factor (the role enactment of the countries in the chair). In addition to this, during critical junctures, the role set expands to include a function of institutional entrepreneurs tasked with interpretation and implementation of the formal provisions into every day practises. Thus, the first post-Lisbon Presidencies possessed additional capacity to act as institutional entrepreneurs. This has gradually decreased as the new system matured and functional and informal expectations became more stable and applicable across subsequent Presidencies. The post-Lisbon role assessment focuses on the contribution towards the greater functioning of the post-Lisbon system, and thus focuses on its effectiveness in ensuring support towards new actors and coherence across various policy areas. Nevertheless, with the permanent presidencies of the HRVP and the EEAS, the rotating Presidency might shed its hat of a neutral broker and focus more on pursuing national preferences, as it was in the case of the Polish Presidency. Limited formal functions might result in shifting the Presidency in EU foreign affairs more towards an intergovernmental function.

Consequently, the process of the post-Lisbon Presidency's role institutionalisation during the 2-year period of the implementation of the LT's provisions was based on all of the indicated factors: firstly, the previous pre-Lisbon Presidency's role and its functions; secondly, the institutional feedback emerging from the fledgling system and on the particular role making of the Member States in the chair. Thirdly, each of the four first Member States had a different role preference of its time in the office and this was both influenced by particular role conceptions of national foreign policy and the European membership strategy. Fourthly, this role preference was also adjusted in a response to particular expectations held towards the individual Member States, but also towards a more general role of the Presidency institution itself. The latter was to a large extent affected by the performance of the previous Presidencies and their assessment. One of the key assessment factors was if the Presidency managed to benefit to the better operations of the post-Lisbon system and to the performance of the newly created actors being in charge of the post-Lisbon foreign policy making. Finally, the comparison of the case studies of the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies enables to conclude that these two countries had a different capacity while pursuing its original role preference of the Presidency. While both Hungary and Poland officially announced the Presidency's plans to

play a more active role in EU foreign affairs and in particular to shift the focus of the EU agenda to the Eastern neighbours, Hungary did not manage to follow up with this political role. Hungary's functional and supportive role performed towards the HRVP and the EEAS was favourably assessed at the European stage and set an example of the post-Presidency's role. Poland managed to pursue a more active role on the EU stage, it also managed to promote some of the key national interests, such the EU relations with the EU Eastern neighbours and the declaration establishing the EED. Therefore, Poland also offered the first example of successful agenda setting in the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making. With reference to agenda shaping, due to its diminished formal role, the capacity of the Presidency to act as a policy entrepreneur depends more on the national influence capacity of the country in the chair than the influence capacity of the institution itself. This, however, should be the subject of further research, together with the ongoing consolidation of the post-Lisbon institutional architecture.

	Spain	Belgium	Hungary	Poland
Role expectations				
Administrative management	High	High	Moderate	Low
Honest Brokering	High	High	Moderate	Low
Policy Entrepreneurship	Moderate	Lack	Moderate	High
Representation internal and external	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
HRVP's deputisation	Moderate	High	High	Moderate
Role preference				
Administrative management	High	High	Moderate	Low (high only in areas of national preferences)
Honest Brokering	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low
Policy Entrepreneurship	High	Lack	Lack	High
Representation internal	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate (mostly in areas

and external				of national preferences)
HRVP's deputisation	High	High	Moderate	High (in areas of national preferences)
Role enactment				
Administrative management	High	High	Moderate	Low
Honest Brokering	High	High	Moderate	Low
Policy Entrepreneurship	High	Lack	Low	High
Representation internal and external	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
HRVP's deputisation	High	High		Moderate

Table 10. A Comparative Analysis of Role Expectations, Role Preference and Role Enactment with Reference to Individual Presidencies

9.2 Towards the Role Prescription of the Post-Lisbon Presidency

As concluded by Carta ‘the rotating Presidencies throughout the first two years contributed massively to shape the rules of procedures regimenting the EU’s institutional machinery’ (Carta 2013: 91). The Presidency's role in the post-Lisbon context has emerged both as a result of the formal provisions as envisaged in the LT and as that of the subsequent process of informal adaptation of these provisions to more practical working arrangements among the actors involved in European foreign policy making. Therefore, the role of the post-Lisbon Presidency has developed as the result of unintended consequences of the structural deficiencies that emerged from the implementation of the LT, enabling the country in the chair to play a greater role. The LT has created a multi-actor and complex environment, in which the performance of one actor affects the roles and performance of others. Thus, the Presidency's role depends both on how other actors interpret their own role and also on how capable they are in performing these roles. This further affected the Presidency's role and inter-institutional position in terms of the more specific institutional feedback.

As argued on the basis of the Presidency's role institutionalisation, its role and particular functions develop both as a result of the institutional feedback and the particular role making of individual countries in the chair. The impact of the latter one is argued to be conditioned by the subsequent stage of the role assessment, as the consolidation of the Presidency's scenario into a more stable role prescription would be dependent on being enforced by subsequent countries in the chair of the Presidency. As argued earlier, the Presidency’s being to a large extent conditioned by the informal expectations in the pre-Lisbon context has been regarded as being very sensitive to the norm-based approach and other actors' assessment., As demonstrated by the example of the subsequent Presidencies, Belgium's role preference was conditioned by a rather negative assessment of the Spanish Presidency. Furthermore, the successful assessment of Belgium's performance in its supporting and functional role resulted in expectations towards the Hungarian Presidency to continue this approach. Overall, the assessment of the post-Lisbon Presidency is based on its overall impact on the new post-Lisbon system, and its contribution towards ensuring the system's coherence and effectiveness. This creates an expectation of a supporting and functional Presidency; however, this is only a minimalist scenario which should be performed by individual countries. The overall role ambiguity of the post-Lisbon Presidency in EU external actions has enabled particular Member

States to project their individual role preference towards interpreting the supporting and functional aspects of the Presidency. Thus, it is up to individual Presidencies to establish their particular strategy for the Presidency in the framework of the HRVP's deputisation. For this reason, one might still expect some variations among Member States.

A supporting and functional scenario for the post-Lisbon Presidency is nowadays a rather consolidated part of the expectations towards the Presidency's role; even though this has not been directly institutionalised. However, the Presidency's role was acknowledged in some of the documents, from which the most important was the review of the EEAS presented by the HRVP. Its presentation in mid-2013 gave the HRVP a chance not only to review the structure and function of the EEAS itself, but also the overall functioning and effectiveness of the post-Lisbon system. The document attempted to address some of the unintended consequences that emerged in the aftermath of the LT's implementation, and provide more formalised working arrangements. The overall tendency seems to point towards further limiting the role of the Presidency. Thus, the chairmanship of the remaining WGs under the current rotating management is argued to be transferred to the permanent management under the EEAS (HRVP 2013: 6). As explained by the HRVP, 'given the close relationship between the work of these groups and the policy areas covered by groups already chaired by the EEAS, and in the interest of policy coherence, it would make sense to consider a change in the relevant CEU decision to provide permanent chairs for these groups as well (with the transfer of support staff from the CEU Secretariat to the EEAS)' (ibid).

Moreover, 'there should be a special relationship between the EEAS and the Enlargement Working Group (COELA) working group' (2013: 6). The review acknowledges the emergence of the HRVP's deputisation framework by highlighting that 'concentration of responsibilities in a single post generates a huge and relentless workload for one person' (HRVP 2013: 13). The assessment of the current arrangements is 'ad-hoc and involve the Minister of the rotating Presidency, Members of the Commission with geographic responsibilities, senior EEAS officials and EUSRs' and should be formalised, 'including a more direct co-ordinating responsibility on behalf of the Union for the HR/VP over one or more members of the Commission' (...) at the same time, the High Representative could involve Member States' FMs in more specific tasks and missions' (Ibid.). This point seems to positively assess the thus far involvement of the Presidency in the HRVP's deputisation function through involving the FM of the country exercising

the Presidency. The role of the Presidency is also acknowledged with reference to attending the EP's briefings and debates as 'Ministers from the rotating Presidency can also make a very valuable contribution' (HRVP 2013: 13); however, it was also noted that: 'there are occasionally situations where the person standing in for the High Representative has not personally attended a key meeting or event and where another senior EEAS representative could provide a more informed contribution. It would therefore make sense to revise the Declaration on Political Accountability to allow EP plenary debates to follow the practice in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament where senior EEAS officials, Heads of Delegation or EU Special Representatives also take the floor' (Ibid.). Such an undertaking could formalise the role of the Presidency by making it a part of the more inter-institutional framework of the HRVP's deputisation.

A five-year period is still quite a limited time for the assessment of the post-Lisbon institutional system; however, some preliminary assessment can be made. First of all, the interviewees supported the added-value of the permanent Presidency over the FAC, pointing to greater continuity of the agenda; with reference to the coherence of the EU external action further coordination should be ensured among relevant actors, namely the HRVP, EEAS, the Commission as well as the Presidency. However, it was rather the cooperation among the first three institutions that was conceived of as being the most pressing. Additionally, it was also highlighted that the removal of the Presidency from the exercise of agenda shaping allows the development of a more European agenda, even though, the lack of long-term strategic thinking on the side of the HRVP and the EEAS has largely undermined the potential significance of this institutional change. Finally, it was also noted that without the Presidency being formally tasked with the management of EU affairs, the latter was negatively affected by the lack of the 'Presidency effect', as countries in the chair are less inclined to invest their time and powers into driving the EU foreign policy agenda. Nevertheless, as seen by the example of the Polish Presidency, large Member States might still engage extensive national resources in the EU's service during its six-month period in the office. The initiative of the European Endowment Fund 'shows the potential of the new architecture and the possibility of the Presidencies to gather different expertise from both the EEAS and the Commission to promote new initiatives' (Carta 2013: 92). It is evident, in this sense, that ensuring the Presidency's involvement and close cooperation can positively affect the EU foreign policy making particularly in the areas of expertise of countries in the chair. It

was not the aim of this thesis to undertake the assessment of the effectiveness of the post-Lisbon European foreign policy making; however, such an assessment might have further impact on the Presidency's role. The Presidency's further development will depend on the performance of the POTE, HRVP and the EEAS, the overall effectiveness in performing their functions as well as the assessment of countries who are ultimately the main decision makers in EU foreign affairs.

9.3 The post-Lisbon Presidency post-2011

The subsequent Presidencies continued with the established practice of providing functional and organisation support for the HRVP and the EEAS. Some of the countries, for example, Denmark, Netherlands and Luxembourg pursued their Presidencies in line with the Belgian example exercising no political leadership, rather focusing on the supportive and functional management of the EU foreign affairs for the HRVP. In the case of the Danish Presidency, this can be illustrated by the example of the EED as the final design of the organisation and its establishment was managed by the EEAS with no involvement of the Danish officials.

Other Presidencies still attempted to have some influence on the EU's agenda. Even though Cyprus' position to a large extent was undermined by the ongoing conflict with Turkey and its boycott of the Presidency, Cyprus still focused on providing expertise and organisational assistance for both the EEAS and the HRVP in the area of the Southern EU neighbourhood (Christou 2013). The Irish Presidency took a particularly active role in with reference to EU security and defence policy. In the anticipation of the December European Council Ireland put a particular focus on promoting the discussion on 'the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the EU's security and defence policy, the development of civilian and military capabilities in support of that policy; and the strengthening of Europe's defence industrial base' (Tonra 2013). Thus, clearly aiming to strengthen the EU security and defence policy. Italy was the first of the biggest EU Member States and one of the major players on the EU stage to hold the post-Lisbon Presidency in the second half of 2014. As pointed out by Carbone 'there were two Italian presidencies at work' (2015) and thus resulting in two separate agendas as in the case of the Hungarian Presidency. While the political Presidency focused on promoting the strengthening of the EU on the basis of intergovernmentalism, the bureaucratic' Presidency focused on administrative and functional support for the EU institutions.

Both Lithuania and Latvia managed to turn the EU agenda to the East while hosting the third and fourth summits of the Eastern Partnership. Even though, neither of the summits managed to provide any significant advance between the EU and its Eastern neighbours both Presidencies managed to have an impact on the pace of the EU policy making system and the final impact on the EU's actions (Vandecasteele 2014, Borońska-Hryniewiecka and Dudzińska 2015).

Moreover, the individual Presidencies still attract particular expectations towards its time in the office, for example, Lithuania was expected to provide a space for improving the relations between the EU and Belarus (Dudzińska and Dyner 2013). The focus on the Eastern border of the EU was continued by the Slovak Presidency in the second half of 2016 only to be shifted back to the Southern border in the beginning of 2017 when Malta took the rotating chairmanship. Even though the permanent management is now provided by the HRVP the individual Presidencies can still provide a particular expertise and support in policy areas which are of particular national interests. Thus, even though with the subsequent Presidencies the post-Lisbon role and inter-institutional position have been clarified the role prescription remains flexible enough for the individual Presidencies to pursue its role according to national and European role conceptions.

Date	Country
January-June 2012	Denmark
July-December 2012	Cyprus
January-June 2013	Ireland
July-December 2013	Lithuania
January-June 2014	Greece
July-December 2014	Italy
January-June 2015	Latvia
July-December 2015	Luxembourg
January-June 2016	Netherlands
July-December 2016	Slovakia
January-June 2017	Malta

Table 11. The list of the EU Council Rotating Presidencies 2012-2017

In the concluding section I will reflect on the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the thesis by outlining their strengths and limitations. I will also provide a discussion of the potential avenues for future research stemming from the empirical and theoretical findings.

9.4 Role Theory, the Presidency and Institutional Change

Role theory proved its particular added-value towards providing a more in-depth analysis of the performance of individual Presidencies' by highlighting the impact of particular features of the Member States as well as the particular overall context. One of the most useful features of role theory is its flexibility as it can be combined with other approaches. Thus, when combined with new institutionalism, role theory has made it possible to capture the institutional changes of the Presidency as a result of the interaction between the structure and agency, namely institutional feedback and the role making, respectively. There were variations between how the Member States in the chair of the first post-Lisbon Presidencies interpret and enact their role, and this can be explained by the role-based insights included in the proposed model. Therefore, the individual interpretation of the Presidency's role by the Member State in the chair as well as their subsequent performance might either be empowered or constrained by the functional expectations stemming from the system. The application of such a role-based approach might offer an alternative solution for the ongoing structure-agency debate as well as offer a new manner of conceptualisation of the institutionalist argument of a more gradual and endogenous institutional change. Operationalising the concept of 'incomplete contracting' through the process of role institutionalisation enables to capture implementation of the formal provisions through the process of informal institutional adaptation and possible role expansion.

As observed by Elgström in the pre-Lisbon period the Member State in the chair had 'a certain degree of freedom in their role performance' (2003: 13). By focusing on the Member States' identity and their previous experiences it was possible to understand 'what was for them the appropriate interpretation of the Presidency role' (Ibid.) Studying the Presidency through the lenses of role theory enables to better capture its hybrid nature. As argued by Leal 'the Presidency (...) represents an interesting EU entity, neither purely intergovernmental, nor supranational, but a little of both' (2010: 288). By using various role concepts, such as role preference, role expectations and role enactment, it is possible to escape the 'logic of consequentiality versus logic of appropriate-

ness' debate, and to focus on the actual behaviour of the country in the chair across various policy areas. The empirical findings suggest that the post-Lisbon Presidency would continue as a complex role set with some defined formal functions, such as chairmanship of some Council's preparatory and WGs, and some informal ones, the HRVP's deputisation. While the first feature would entrust the Presidency with functions, the second feature would allow for a more individual interpretation of the role of the HRVP's deputy. The function of deputisation might be interpreted as a mere functional replacement of the HRVP by acting according to the instructions, or might be used as a basis for negotiating the terms of such deputisation. Such negotiations might enable the Member State in the Chair performing more sensitive functions of agenda shaping and political leadership in, as arranged with the HRVP, areas of EU foreign affairs. Thus, role theory makes it possible to overcome the deterministic explanations that treat the Presidency as a national or Community function, rather enabling the exploration of the Presidency's performance as an opportunity for projecting particular national role conceptions to the European level.

As noted in the Introduction, one of the limitations of this project was that the main comparative analysis is based on the example of the first four Member States in the chair of the Presidency, after the provisions of the LT began to be implemented in 2010. This created a unique transitional period, but the context of exercising the Presidency may change over time and the identified role conceptions, role expectations and factors shaping the context of the role institutionalisation process may be only applicable to this particular context. As argued before, the main purpose of this study was to develop a test model enabling the examination of the mechanism of incremental and endogenous institutional change. The applicability of this model to studying the institutional change in different institutional and policy context should be further tested.

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Annex I Interview Schedule

The stage of preliminary interviews was conducted with officials of the Spanish and Belgian Presidency in December 2010 and March 2011.

Interview reference code	Institutional affiliation	Date
ESa/12.2010	Spanish Presidency (CFSP Division)	December 2010
ESb/12.2010	Spanish Presidency, REPER (East Europe Division)	December 2010
ESc/12.2010	Spanish Presidency, REPER (Political and Security Committee)	December 2010
BEa/03.2011	Belgian Presidency, REPER (ANTCI)	March 2011
BEb/03.2011	Belgian Presidency, REPER (COREPER II)	March 2011

Table 12 List of coded interviews with the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies' officials

For example the code ESa/12.2010 refers to an official involved in the Spanish Presidency based in the CFSP Unit who was interviewed on December 2010. The latter 'a' identify this person as a first person from the Spanish Presidency to be interviewed for this project.

The interviews were divided into three themes:

1. The role conception of the Spanish/Belgian Presidency
 - How did you understand Spain/Belgium role in the chair of the post-Lisbon Presidency? Did this change at any stage of the Presidency?
 - Is this interpretation different to the previous Presidencies held by your country?
 - What are the main functions to be performed by the Presidency?
 - Are you aware of any particular expectations facing your country or the institution of the Presidency itself?
2. The performance of the Spanish/Belgian Presidency
 - What are the main activities performed by the Presidency's officials?
 - Could you please give some examples of functions performed by the Presidency?
 - Are there any particular policy areas where the Presidency plays a more active role? Is the Presidency still capable of influencing the foreign policy making within the EU system?

3. The Presidency's assessment

- How do you think your Presidency was assessed at the national, European and international stages?
- Do you the Presidency can be still a relevant player on the European stage? If yes under which conditions?
- Did your Presidency manage to clarify the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in practice and the new role of the Presidency in the new system?

The main stage of the project focused on interviewing national officials involved in the Hungarian and Polish Presidency. Few of the officials, as indicated in the table were contacted and interviewed pre-, during and post-Presidency.

Interview reference code	Institutional affiliation	Date
HUa/12.2010	Hungarian Presidency, REPER (COEST)	December 2010
HUa/03.2011		March 2011
HUa/07.2011		July 2011
HUb/07.2011	Hungarian Presidency, REPER(Political and Security Committee)	July 2011
HUc/12.2010	Hungarian Presidency, REPER (FAC)	December 2010
HUc/03.2012		March 2011
HUc/09.2012		September 2011
HUd/07.2011	Hungarian Presidency, REPER (ANTICI)	July 2011
HUe/12.2010	Hungarian Presidency, MFA (Institutional Affairs)	December 2010
HUe/03.2011		March 2011
HUe/07.2011		July 2011
HUf/12.2010	Hungarian Presidency, MFA (Institutional Affairs)	December 2010
HUf/03.2011		March 2011
HUf/07.2011		July 2011

Table 13 List of coded interview with the Hungarian Presidency's officials

Interview reference code	Institutional affiliation	Date
PLa/03.2011	Polish Presidency, REPER (ANTICI)	March 2011
PLa/10.2011		October 2011
PLa/04.2012		April 2012
PLb/04.2012	Polish Presidency, MFA (Development Policy)	April 2012
PLc/03.2011	Polish Presidency, MFA (Development Policy)	March 2011
PLc/09.2011		September 2011
PLc/05.2012		May 2012
PLd/05.2012	Polish Presidency, MFA (Development Policy)	May 2012
PLe/03.2011	Polish Presidency, MFA (Development Policy)	March 2011
PLe/09.2011		September 2011
PLe/05.2012		May 2012
PLf/03.2011	Polish Presidency, MFA (Eastern Department)	March 2011
PLf/09.2011		September 2011
PLf/05.2012		May 2012
PLg/03.2011	Polish Presidency, REPER (COEST)	March 2011
PLg/09.2011		September 2011
PLg/01.2012		January 2012
PLh/05.2012	Polish Presidency, REPER (External Relations)	May 2012
PLi/03.2011	Polish Presidency, REPER (COREPER II)	March 2011
PLi/09.2011		September 2011
PLi/05.2012		May 2012
PLj/04.2012	Polish Presidency, MFA (Institutional Affairs)	April 2012
PLk/04.2012	Polish Presidency, REPER (European Correspondent)	April 2012

Table 14 List of coded interview with the Polish Presidency's officials

The interviews were structured in a similar manner following the three themes of the Presidency's role conception, the actual performance during the 6-month period in the chair and the final assessment and post-Presidency reflections.

The interviews were divided into three themes:

1. The role conception of the Hungarian/Presidency Presidency
 - How did you interpret the role in the chair of the post-Lisbon Presidency? Did this change at any stage of the Presidency?
 - Was this different with interpretation of your own Presidency's role in comparison to other countries that were in the chair before your country?
 - What are the main functions to be performed by the Presidency? Is this new functional scope clear for you?

- Are you aware of any particular expectations facing your country or/and the institution of the Presidency itself?
2. The performance of the Hungarian/Polish Presidency
- What are the main activities performed by the Presidency's officials?
 - Could you please give some examples of functions performed by the Presidency?
 - Are there any particular policy areas where the Presidency plays a more active role? Is the Presidency still capable of influencing the foreign policy making within the EU system?
3. The Presidency's assessment
- How do you think your Presidency was assessed at the national, European and international stages?
 - Do you think the Presidency can be still a relevant player on the European stage? If yes under which conditions?
 - Did your Presidency manage to clarify the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in practice and the new role of the Presidency in the new system?

As indicated in table 12 and 13 few of the officials involved in the Hungarian and Polish Presidency were interviewed three times, before the Presidency began, during the Presidency and after the Presidency was concluded. In these cases the first interview focused on the questions relating to the Presidency's role conception, the second on the actual performance and during the final interview previous questions were repeated in order to check for any variations and the interview was concluded by collecting answers on the Presidency's assessment.

The final stage of the interviewing focused on officials from the EU institutions and experts on the EU foreign policy and the post-Lisbon EU policy making system focusing on the performance of the individual Presidencies and their impact on the emerging post-Presidency role following the previously outlined questions.

Interview reference code	Institutional affiliation	Date
SGCa/05.2012	Secretariat General of the EU Council (Institutional Relations)	May 2012
SGCb/05.2012	Secretariat General of the EU Council (Institutional Relations)	May 2012
SGCc/05.2012	Secretariat General of the EU Council (External Relations)	May 2012
GB/05.2012	UK REPER (Political and Institutional Affairs)	May 2012
FR/05.2012	France REPER (ANTICI Counsellor)	May 2012
EEASa/04.2012	EEAS (COEST)	April 2012
EEASb/06.2012	EEAS (Democracy Support)	June 2012
EEASc/04.2012	EEAS (ENP)	April 2012
COMa/05.2012	European Commission (EuropeAid ENP)	May 2012
POTEC/04.2012	Cabinet of POTEC	April 2012
EPa/05.2012	European Parliament SG (Foreign Policy Advisor)	May 2012
EPb/05.2012	European Parliament (Presidency Services)	May 2012
EPc/05.2012	European Parliament (Planning Unit)	May 2012
EPd/05.2012	European Parliament (Inter-institutional Relations Unit)	May 2012
EPe/04.2012	European Parliament (EaP)	April 2012
EPf/04.2012	European Parliament (Secretariat of the Committee on Foreign Affairs)	April 2012
CEPS/01.2012	Centre for European Policy Studies (EU Institutional Unit)	January 2012
EPC/01.2012	European Policy Centre (Foreign Policy Unit)	January 2012
HBS/01.2012	Heinrich Böll Stiftung (CFSP Unit)	January 2012
CES/11.2011	Centre for Eastern Studies	November 2011
UA/01.2012	Mission of Ukraine to the EU (Foreign Policy Unit)	January 2012

Table 15 List of coded interview with the remaining interviewees

Annex II Chairmanship of the Preparatory Bodies of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)

1. Category 1 chaired by the rotating Presidency: preparatory bodies in the area of trade and development.
2. Category 2 chaired by a representative of the High Representative: geographic preparatory bodies.
3. Category 3 chaired by a representative of the High Representative: horizontal preparatory bodies, mainly CFSP, except the following preparatory bodies, which shall be chaired by the six-monthly Presidency:
 - Working Party of Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX),
 - Working Party on Terrorism (International Aspects) (COTER),
 - Working Party on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism (COCOP),
 - Working Party on Consular Affairs (COCON),
 - Working Party on Public International Law (COJUR),
 - Working Party on the Law of the Sea (COMAR).
4. Category 4 chaired by a representative of the High Representative: CSDP-related preparatory bodies.

For categories 3 and 4, the rotating Presidency was to chair the preparatory bodies during a transitional period of up to six months after the adoption of the Council Decision on the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS). For category 2 this transitional period was set up to 12 months.